

LOW  
RUN  
TIDE

LAVA  
ROCK

2 Novels in 1 Volume

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.. *By* .. ELLIOT PAUL ..

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# LOW RUN TIDE, and LAVA ROCK

*Two Novels in One Volume*

By **ELLIOT PAUL**

Author of *Indelible*, *Imperturbe*, etc.


**T**HERE has been no book from Elliott Paul since 1924. His earlier books, *INDELIBLE*, *IMPROMPTU*, and *IMPERTURBE*, all made a stir when published. He has been in Paris for some years, studying contemporary literary movements, particularly as co-editor with Eugene Jolas of *Transition*, a magazine which has published some of the most interesting material issued in years.

These two new novels deal with contrasting phases of American life. *LOW RUN TIDE* reveals the life of an old New England fishing town, where the inhabitants are close to the soil and the sea, adjusting their occupations to the seasons and continuing the customs of their forefathers even after the maritime civilization which nourished them has ceased to exist.

*LAVA ROCK* is a story of a construction camp in the far west,—the building of a great dam in a remote deserted canyon, the relation of swarms of characters from all corners of the world. In a short span of years, a community grows, performs its function, and the builders are dispersed, leaving nothing but the structure to record their meeting in the barren hills.







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LOW RUN TIDE \* LAVA ROCK



LOW RUN TIDE  
AND  
LAVA ROCK



ELLIOT  
PAUL



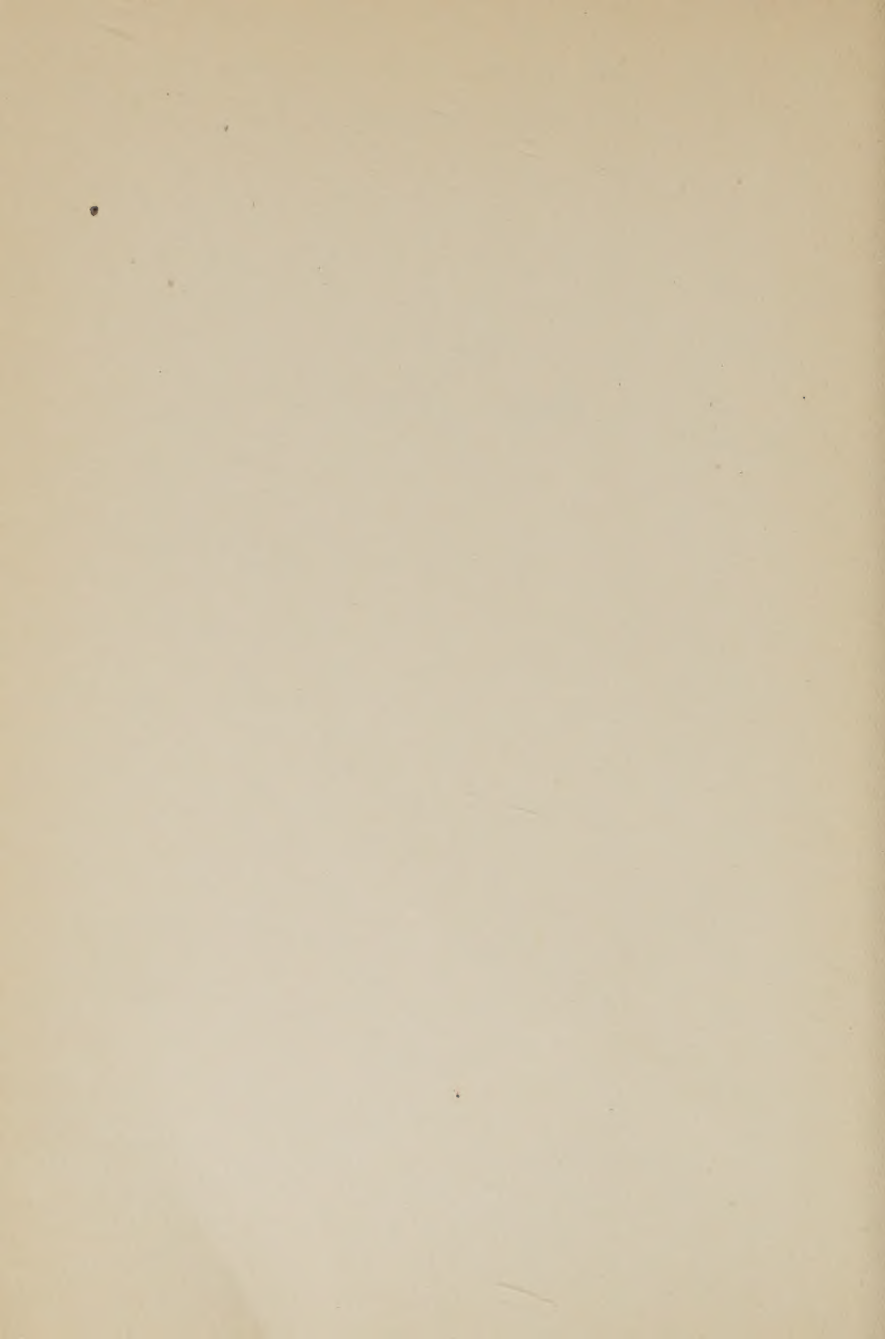
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TO  
*Eugene Jolas*





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LOW RUN TIDE





## *Part One*

### I


THE town of Steuben, in an obscure section of Maine which has remained much the same since the first fishermen from England and France decided to stay the winter in America, has changed even more slowly than the neighboring settlements, for it lies five miles back from the coast, between two arms of a tidal river, and the railroad which was built to open up large tracts of pulp wood farther north misses it by three miles on the inland side. From the small station and loading platform which bears its name, Steuben cannot be seen at all, only the roofs of one or two outlying houses. A narrow road, encroached upon by branches of alder and sumac, leads through dense woods, mounting steadily for a while, then dipping into a valley where the river has spread into broad marsh lands, on which the mud gleams black and purple at low tide. On the slopes a few cattle are pastured and the road broadens a bit at the next summit, from which there is a view of the distant sea, and is lined with stately trees and dwelling houses all down the

hill to the crossroads, where another segment of the winding river bounds the village on the south.

The approach to Steuben from the sea is even more difficult, for the river is filled with hidden ledges and sawdust piles from deserted sawmills. Even small boats cannot come up so far unless the tide is right, and then the channel is tortuous and tricky.

The principal landing is near the crossroads so that the wagons from all the surrounding countryside and the boats that venture up from the bay bring up naturally at this central meeting place and it was there that Captain Varenus Plummer's general store was located. The houses of Steuben, set among the luxuriant oaks and tamaracks and horse-chestnut trees, were gray and unpainted for the most part, with rough-hewn timbers and sagging shingle roofs, but they had been built in the days when the boss carpenters did their own designing and knew their materials well. The bannisters were hand-carved and the fireplaces had old brick ovens still used for baking beans or bread. Wrought iron fire tools were stacked by the hearths, copper kettles shone in the kitchens and the windows were divided into small square panes. The Plummer residence, across from the store and on a higher level, was the most spacious and the purest in design, except for extra sheds which had been tacked on






behind from time to time. The roof was newly shingled and the sides were painted white, with green blinds and a trellis over the porch. Behind it, at the end of a driveway, stood the stable, also white and topped with a golden rooster and an arrow to point with the winds.

The occupations of the villagers varied with the seasons, taking them at times to sea, again far inland to the lumber woods. In the spring and summer they tended herring weirs or lobster pots, trapped eels and weeded their gardens, and the women who were not busy at home worked as packers in the sardine factory. The hot weather ripened the raspberries and in August the haddock swarmed between the islands of the bay. Then in the early fall, men, women and children, from the richest to the very poor, camped together on the blueberry plains which stretched for miles on the highlands beyond the station. The factory which canned blueberries in the autumn season, handled clams in the months which followed, and the lumber camps started cutting and hauling when the first snow came. Beneath the ice of the Steuben River, silver smelts ran in tens of thousands and muskrats could be trapped along the creeks. Ducks and geese from the Arctic settled on the ponds and marshes during their fall migration and the woods sheltered partridges and deer.

There had been a Plummer among the earliest settlers in the county and the name was a common one in all the villages along that section of the coast. The family had been large and influential, Varenus and his brother, not long dead, both having made their fortune as masters of their own three-masted schooners. The Captain referred to things around his store in nautical terms, as most of the older men did. His stock included groceries, hardware, harness and tools, oarlocks, rigging, paint, oilskins, overalls and patent medicines. He also dealt in hay and grain, bought real estate now and then, and often staked the fishermen through the winter if they had had a bad season, but he was very hard with the families considered to be shiftless and would never do business with any one from the outside unless he got by far the best of the bargain. Like the other Steuben folk, he called all persons from other sections of the country foreigners.

Captain Varenus had two sons and a daughter, all by his first wife, who had been a cousin. The oldest son, Merrill, and his twin sister, Emma, had always been antagonistic to one another and, after a series of quarrels a few years before, Merrill had left town and taken a job in a fish store in a town on the Canadian border, so that he seldom stayed more than a day or two in Steuben except during his vacation, which he took in season to help

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with the blueberry picking. This was Captain Varenus' greatest grief, for Merrill was his favorite, but the old man, too, seemed in awe of his daughter Emma, who was the image of her dead mother, and the whole town remarked about the way she made him step around. The younger son, Claude, was not very bright. He had a loose drooping mouth and let his knees sag when he walked. Besides, he was a little deaf and had a cleft lip which made it seem as if he were talking with his mouth full of pudding. Claude lolled about the store, sitting for hours in the sunshine with his hands in his trousers pockets, or munching dried apricots, surrounded by galvanized wash boilers and buggywhips on the front platform. Often he made small urgent deliveries on foot or with his wheelbarrow, talking encouragingly to himself.

It was Emma who ran the store and the Plummer household. She was a large determined woman with an almost handsome face. Her eyes were gray or blue and she kept her hair brushed back severely from her forehead. Until Captain Varenus had married again and Merrill had gone away, she had taken no interest in the business, remaining restlessly at home to boss the hired girl or driving her spirited horse on errands of her own. Her cheeks were red and her bosom rounded but the only man who had ever come near her was Captain Bar-

tholomew Bangs, fifteen years her senior, who had gone to sea again and persisted in running a coaster from Kennybunkport down south. Up to a certain time, Emma had seemed to control her father's doings around the house, but after Merrill had left the Captain began cruising around the country in his buggy and soon became a regular caller at the house of Lucy Maxwell, two-thirds his age, who spent her life tending hollyhocks in her garden and working incessantly for Methodist church suppers and the local branch of the public library. Varenus would drive her to the lobster pound on Sunday before the evening meeting and would sit beside her in church, to the great amusement of some of the men who had sailed under him. His roan horse chewed and fretted for hours at her hitching post.

When the time came, Lucy could not bear to marry Captain Plummer, although she respected his position in the community and found him kind enough. She had gotten so used to her kitchen, she said, that she could not bear to leave it. At once he offered to have it taken apart and set up at the back of his own large house and after it had been moved in sections and painted white to match the rest of the Plummer homestead (much to the disgust of Emma, who despised women with notions of any sort) the woodbine soon grew over the roof and the doorway, and the neighbors became accustomed



to seeing the big house at the crossroads in its new and elongated shape. Lucy sang hymns very softly about the place in the early morning, tending the flower gardens, visiting the sick and taking baskets of groceries and cooked food to families in distress by means of the Captain's buggy. Varenus denied her nothing, but Emma, having less than ever to do and constantly irritated by Lucy's cheerfulness and patience, decided to go into the store for the same money the Captain had been paying Miss Dexter, a spinster who lived a half mile down the marsh road, apart from the main cluster of houses opposite the landing, and who never had been popular with the customers because she talked in a high-pitched hollow voice and was a Christian Scientist. So Miss Dexter went crying down the road, with Claude trudging beside her with his wheelbarrow and stopping now and then to watch a seagull which had alighted on the dike.

Trade had fallen off, also, in the store because Clarence Bangs, who owned and operated the sardine factory just across the west branch of the river, had opened up a small store of his own to serve the hands in the factory and the group of people who lived near the Congregational Church and the schoolhouse on the western hill.

Bangs was not a native of Steuben, but his establishment was the only one to rival the Plum-



mer's in importance. He had come to the town before the Spanish-American War, after his brother Bartholomew had brought a small schooner once or twice up the river, and he had first built the sardine factory, later adding another small factory for the canning of blueberries and clams. His body was huge and flabby but capable of great activity and he spoke in an almost petulant tone of voice.

"Can't you get them to work just a little faster, Charlie?" he would say to the foreman when the floor of the packing room was being scrubbed and no fish were going into the cans.

The Bangs house was on the hill behind the factory and was painted yellow, with an ornate front cut out with a jig saw and lightning rods on the peak and each corner of the roof. It was more up-to-date than the other residences and was kept in constant repair by the carpenter who built racks and mended the benches in the factory. The year in which Captain Varenus was married was a bad one for Bangs, in spite of his new store. Contrary to the advice of his carpenter, he had finished with matched boards a row of small shacks he had built for the factory workers to live in. The vertical cracks had filled up so rapidly with bugs that some of the women had refused to stay there. And in the autumn, a government inspector had arrived at the blueberry plains, making tests and writing

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long reports by lantern light, so that Bangs had had to take extra and expensive precautions at the factory so long as the stranger was in town.


The villagers, too, had complained at having to pay taxes to support the men who took away their livelihood. For the prosperity of Steuben depended almost as much upon the blueberries as upon the abundance of herring. Just after it had been discovered that by burning the land every third year tremendous crops of berries could be raised, and a rake had been devised for picking them in quantities, Captain Varenus had bought up the large high-land tracts and at first had done well, until the government inspectors had complained that there was a grub in each berry. The entire community had been hard hit, for the poorer families counted on what they earned picking blueberries to buy their winter groceries.

Since his wife's death, Bangs' daughter Lena had kept house for him, until she fell in love with a young college boy who was one of the very few summer visitors to reach Steuben. The young man, who wore white knitted sweaters and heavy-rimmed glasses, spoke too correctly to the workmen but, after trying to chase him away, Bangs had finally given in, consented to the marriage and made Warren his bookkeeper and vice-president, with one share of the common stock. Warren, being

naturally lazy, settled down to the village routine and became quite content with it. His father-in-law alternately nagged him and praised him.

The entry of Warren into the village, in spite of his indolence, enlivened it, since he was fond of music and played the cornet well. He found one of the factory hands who could chord on the piano a little and a sailor who fiddled. Soon he induced one of the school boys to learn the trap drums, and an orchestra developed which played for dances in the Grange Hall every Thursday evening in summer. Buggies and Fords came often from the towns nearby, the Plummer store remained open to sell ice cream during intermission and Clarence Bangs lost part of his standing with the Methodist minister who preached against cards and dancing in the face of his two wealthiest supporters. Captain Varenus did not worry, for his part was an indirect one. He said, and even Lucy agreed, that if the young people could not come into the store, they would be out in the buggies in the dark. He waited impatiently, however, for closing time, having gone to bed early all his life.

For like all sea-faring people and their descendants, the inhabitants of Steuben got up at sunrise. In the large white house at the crossroads Lucy started things moving with the help of the hired girl, while Emma opened up the store in time for




the milkman and certain lobstermen who passed that way before starting on their morning round. The tides sent the river creeping over the flats of sweet grass. Motor boats chugged in with loads of herring, and the tall black smokestack of the factory against the western hill sent up columns of fragrant woodsmoke as the fires were lighted at breakfast time and the sharp smell of ham and coffee escaped on the morning air.

## II

MERRILL PLUMMER seldom came back to Steuben except for Thanksgiving, Christmas or on week-ends in winter when the hunting was good, and even then he had little to do with the neighbors he had grown up with. He liked best to drive into the woods alone, with a bobsled or the old delivery pung, and often he would blanket the horse and leave him tied by the roadside while he walked across country on snowshoes, stooping swiftly to look at the animal tracks or to strip off a cluster of checkerberries. As a boy he had felt a vast security in the silence of the fields and forest, a quick familiarity with the sights and sounds and a sense of power which disappeared when he was in company. As he had grown older and the sense of his strength had increased, his feeling of frustration

had increased, also, so that Emma could sting him to sudden anger by a look or a single contemptuous word. He was a good shot and knew where the birds and animals were to be found but he was so close-mouthed about it that the less successful hunters were jealous of his luck.

When his elder son was at home, Captain Varenus joked garrulously with every one in the store or the house, winking and throwing out continual hints that Merrill should give up his job and live in Steuben with the others. The old man had never worked for wages and thought no enterprising man should do so. He had never understood exactly why Merrill had left, since he was so fond of outdoor life and so disdainful of the summer visitors from the city, who couldn't hitch up a team or row a boat. The old man, while aware of Emma's sharp tongue and rather careful not to cross her, had gotten used to the same manner while her mother was alive and believed it natural for a full-blooded woman to be a little touchy. But toward the last, Merrill had seldom spoken to his sister, except to ask for things at the table, and having heard the stock raisers joke about the qualities of twins began to believe there was something queer about himself on that account and blamed her for it. Neither could he bear the sight of his brother Claude who was the butt for all the jokes



of the town. Merrill had made one voyage on a fishing schooner, where he had squatted on deck hour by hour to bait the trawl, hooking the clams mechanically and paying out the line, or watching the lights in the dories swing up and down in the darkness. Afterwards he had taken his share of the profits to the border town, spending nearly all he had for clothes which did not quite fit him and for food which made his stomach ache. The longer he stayed away the more determined he was not to return home, so one morning when he saw a sign "Man Wanted" in front of a fish shore he entered and asked for the job.

"Can you clean a fish?" the proprietor asked, misjudging Merrill in his new suit. Merrill reached for a haddock on the counter, ripping open the belly and trimming out the entrails with nothing but his thumbnail, then tossing the fish back to the boards.

"You'll do," the man said. He boasted afterward that Merrill was the only man in town who could shoulder a barrel of herring.

One Saturday in early January, when the trees lining the main road of Steuben caught the softly falling snow on twigs and branches, and the river on either side of the village was welling up through the ice at flood tide, Captain Varenus sat scraping the frost from the back window of the storeroom



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with a stick he had whittled into a paddle. He saw a rig coming down the hill from the direction of the station and remembered it was after train time. The rig turned into his own driveway and Merrill stepped out. Delightedly Captain Varenus plowed through the snow in the roadway to greet his son. He had no reason to expect him so soon after Christmas.

But Merrill had little to say to any of them. He wandered around the kitchen, neglecting to eat what was laid out for him, and sat for hours in the woodshed near the bench and toolchest, fumbling with traps and fishing tackle without repairing them and singing distractedly a song which ran in and out of his mind:

"It doesn't matter what you were, it's what you are to-day."

After supper he went straight to bed and got up early in the morning, for no reason at all, roaming from one place to another and mumbling to himself.

His father, hoping always that something would bring Merrill back, was secretly pleased with his son's uneasiness, believing he was tired of his job and of boarding-house cooking. The Captain steered shy of him, so as not to provoke him, but he watched from the windows and chuckled as he wrapped up beans or helped Emma measure out



the molasses. He recognized her as the boss of the store, by that time, and kept pretty much out of her way except when she called upon him. Lucy, busy around the house with her morning work, noticed Merrill's mood at once and sensed that he was in trouble. She spoke cheerily to him as he passed, thought of things he liked to eat and put on a dress of light gray-blue with a clean lace apron.

"I wish we had some more evergreen," she said. "It brightens up the house so."


And Merrill set out to get some for her, while she hummed and smiled. Lucy liked confidences.

From the beginning Merrill had had a strange fondness for his step-mother. She was a fine woman, he would say, thinking bitterly of his sister. He liked a person who could sit still and mind her business, who was not always asking for this or that. When she sat by the window he watched the light shine through the fine strands of her yellow hair and the clothes she wore seemed less mannish than Emma's starched shirtwaists and skirts.

In the afternoon, as Lucy was embroidering a tea set, Merrill sat near her. She told him how well things were going in the store since Emma had taken hold there, that his father was tired and was getting old, and once she joked with him about the girls who still remained single in the village, saying they were just as good as could be found

anywhere else. He flushed and went away abruptly, walking down the shore road toward the factory. As he turned the corner by the postoffice, he thought he heard his name and all the way across the dike he felt that the crowd in the square behind him were talking about him. Once he was on the point of walking to the station and leaving town, but at the top of the hill he turned back, indecisively, and sat alone in the woodshed again. Later Luck asked him gently if anything was the matter and he blurted out that he had gotten Lettie Tizzer into trouble.

He had been home in September for the blueberry picking and had camped with the others for two weeks on the plains. Lettie, who lived with her mother and worked in the packing room of the sardine factory, was picking for Captain Varenus on the swathe next to Merrill and was constantly in his sight, scantily clothed and unconscious of her postures. He worked from morning until night at full speed, picking faster than all the others and making fun of them when they straightened up to ease their backs. In the evening he would drink Jamaica ginger, washing it down with spring water, and often watched Lettie as she moved inside the tent, her shadow elongated by the kerosene lamp. She was a small, over-developed girl of nineteen,



with large dark brown eyes and a sort of timidity which rendered her motionless when any one spoke to her. Her mother, it was said, had at one time been housekeeper for a nigger lobster man and had had a vague and eventful career all along the coast and on the New York waterfront.

Merrill had followed Lettie to the spring one night, when the moon had silvered the fields and cast grotesque shadows around the bushes, and after he had drawn a pail of water for her had overpowered her just as she was. She cried because he had hip boots on and the buckles hurt her. Her sobs had frightened him sober and he had rushed away without speaking to her, leaving the plains the next morning. Lettie had written him one letter and had told no one else. At the border, during the ensuing weeks, Merrill had expected daily that the news would spread all over the countryside, that the whole family would be disgraced and that something would be done to him. He did not tell Lucy the whole story, and she was much less horrified than he had expected she would be, for he had thought of her as a sort of saint. Her first instinct was to comfort Merrill and to turn the misfortune to some good account. After all, she said, Lettie had been a good girl in spite of her surroundings and with a better influence she might turn out to be a

fine woman. All the time she was thinking that marriage might draw Merrill back to Steuben and reunite the family and that the Captain would be so pleased that he would overlook the circumstances and the standing of the Tizzers.

"Perhaps we can keep it quiet," she said. "You ought not to drink, Merrill."

When Lucy called on Mrs. Tizzer and it became clear to the latter that things might turn out much better than she had expected, the old lady, who had beaten her daughter for bringing trouble and expense upon their heads, began to excuse the fault and then to praise the girl. During the interview, Lettie sat nervously in the corner, crying and smiling a little and overwhelmed by Lucy's kindness. She was willing to do anything that was expected of her, but the thought of Merrill's taciturnity and his roughness when he was in liquor made her shudder a little.

Lucy made friends with the girl at once, although she had never before had occasion to speak to her, but during the few days he remained in town Merrill did not come near her, flushing and stammering when he met her in the square. Soon he went back to his job, nearly as bewildered as before, but with the feeling that matters were in Lucy's hands.



## III

WHEN the tide was high enough in the morning for the boat to bring a load of clams to the factory, the whistle blew three times for packers. The sound of the motor chugging downstream could be heard long before the bow of the old converted yawl nosed around the bend. Old Johnny Grey, who acted as watchman and tended eel pots on the side, would call to the fireman to help unload, and bucket after bucket was hoisted by means of a rusty, creaking chain.

One morning, when work started earlier than usual, and the women who had come tramping through the snow from nearby farms were gathered by the stove waiting for the racks to be filled, old Mrs. Tizzer came across the dike alone, her shawl flapping in the wind.

"Where's Lettie?" asked one of the girls.

"Gone to Bangor," the old woman said, and took her place at the bench.

"It's a pity she couldn't go some other time," the foreman said, but no explanation was made. Mrs. Tizzer's numb fingers worked mechanically, shucking the clams and dropping them into a pail. When she heard the others talking, she strained her ears without seeming to pay attention and grunted to herself.



Lettie had ridden to the station in the Plummer carryall with Lucy and sat all morning looking quietly from the car window, as the bleak forests, thinned out by woodcutters and laid waste here and there by fires along the tracks, clicked past. The ice was undisturbed on frozen ponds and, on the platforms of the small stations, men banged their mittens together and joked with the conductor. On the way across the marsh behind Steuben where the ground was bare from the wind, the carryall had passed Vic Perkins, the tinker, who had waved to Lucy but, as usual, had declined to ride. He had whistled as he had seen Lettie in the Plummer rig and thought of it later, as he called from house to house to thaw out pumps or mend storm doors.

The train made Lettie a trifle sick and Lucy noticed her pallor and took her hand. The girl was completely passive, watching Lucy solemnly as she bought tickets and found a seat in the car near the old pot-bellied stove. In Bangor, which Lettie had not seen since she was a small girl, they made their way through the crowd of lumbermen around the station, past the row of employment agencies for the woods, and fishermen's outfitters, where oilskins and sou'westers dangled from hooks, to a department store smelling of varnish and candy.

While Lucy and the saleswoman tried dress after dress on her, Lettie stood behind a screen,



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blushing and embarrassed, trying to cover her legs and bare shoulders in the presence of the older women. It had been a joke at the factory among the men that Lettie and her mother kept their clothes up with haywire. Lucy threw her wrap around the girl, to prevent her from taking cold, and spoke softly to her from time to time. The dress selected was of peach-colored changeable silk, with a sheen of pink or orange as the light struck it, and a full skirt which made Lettie look older. On another floor, Lucy bought a string of artificial pearls.

Going home on the afternoon train, Lucy saw Captain Bartholomew Bangs enter the car carrying his huge fur coat over one arm and throwing a cigar into the coal bucket as he passed.

"Why, hello, Lucy," he said. "I haven't seen you since you walked the plank."

Lucy blushed as he took the seat ahead, turning it over so that he could face them. He did not recognize Lettie.

"This is Lettie Tizzer," Lucy said.

"Why, so it is," the Captain said. His face was red from the heat of the stove behind him and he rested his huge hands on his knees. "I've come ashore for good," he said to Lucy. She mentioned this to Emma at the supper table.

"Supposing he has," Emma retorted. She had

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laughed aloud when Lucy had broached the subject of Merrill's marriage, so hard that she could not stop and had gone to the kitchen with her napkin to her face while Captain Varenus sat bewilderedly, fumbling his beard. From the beginning she had held herself aloof, working harder than ever in the store and keeping Claude and her father on the move. When Mrs. Tizzer came in to buy groceries or snuff, Emma spoke sharply to her and gave her no chance for familiarity and the old woman, appreciative of her attitude, would mumble good-day and hurry out. As the news got around town, and neighbors meeting in the store would mention it to one another, Emma's face would get red and she would stamp from one corner of the place to the other, although few people asked her directly about the affair. The morning after his arrival in Steuben, Captain Bartholomew Bangs came into the store.

"Well, well, Emma," he said heartily, shaking both her hands. "Handsome as ever." Her blue eyes had an almost fierce glint as she looked at him and she shook herself like a cat as he let her go.

"I hear you've quit sailin'," she said.

"Well, not exactly," he replied. "I'm going to pilot the sardine boat for Clarence."

Years before her father had sued Bangs for putting waste from the sardine factory on his potato field for fertilizer and selling it to others for

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a dollar a load, until the whole valley had smelled like a hogpen. It had been the first open clash between the families, and the selectmen had decided in favor of Varenus, who was then chairman of the board.

"When's Merrill coming?" Bartholomew asked.

"How should I know?" said Emma, and turned away.

A few days before the wedding was to take place Merrill arrived in Steuben dressed in a new black suit which he had gotten in a Canadian store across the border and a made-up tie which never hung quite straight nor completely covered his collar-stud. He and his boss had been smelt-fishing the night before, so he took off his clothes and piled into bed as soon as he arrived, avoiding every one but Lucy. When he came down for supper he left his new clothes on the chair and wore a brown flannel shirt and whipcord trousers, which he tucked into a brand new pair of lumberman's rubbers as he walked around the yard. Captain Varenus tried to cheer him up, but he was more morose and silent than ever and Emma kept her eyes on him almost insolently throughout the meal, until he clenched his fists and clamped his jaws together.

In the evening, the whole family sat in the living room, with a driftwood fire in the huge brick fireplace, and Lucy who had slipped out of the

house with a shawl round her head while the hired girl was washing the dishes, entered with Lettie whose knees were trembling as she took her place on the sofa. Merrill could think of little to say when they asked for news from the outside. He greeted Lettie awkwardly, and with some surprise, since she had never entered the house before.

"Show Lettie the two-headed calf," said Claude who was eating Christmas candy from a little network sack. So the stuffed two-headed calf and the pig-headed calf which had been born alive and had died because it was left outdoors all night were brought down from the attic. Merrill was very proud of them and never got over regretting that the pig-shaped freak had died.

"A man could have made a fortune with it," he said, and then he explained how the ears of the two-headed calf were combined, so there were three in all. Lettie could hardly keep from screaming. She thought the smaller one was looking at her, staring steadily all the time, and bit her lips until the stuffed freaks were taken away.

The fire crackled and snapped, while colored lights played around the pine logs. Captain Varenus made a pitcher of grog and even Lucy tasted a little, in honor of the occasion. Soon Merrill got to talking about his boss, who left him alone for days

in the store, and about an Irishman named Toomey, who was customs inspector at the bridge.

"He's the only square Irishman I ever met," Merrill insisted. "When I come across the border, he don't even stop the rig."

"Watch out for government men, son," Varenus said. "They've all got their hands in somewhere."


"Not Toomey," Merrill said, aggressively. "He's a good Irishman." The grog loosened his tongue and he told how a passing schooner had anchored off Trafton's Island and had taken away all the sheep that had been pastured there for years. Lucy said she couldn't see how sheep could live on such a barren island, where the wind had blown the trees nearly flat and the cliffs were so steep that it was almost impossible to land there. The Plummers had gone to the island on a picnic once, while Merrill was still in school, and he had caught a flounder a foot and a half across, three miles out to sea. The mention of fishing set him to musing, for he would drop anything at all to get out in a boat. He knew every ledge along the coast where the Tom cod fed, and the channels in which the had-dock could be found in summer. Often he stopped along the wharf, when business was dull in the store at the border, to help the boys catch flounders, dashing the life out of sculpin while they were still on

the hook and throwing them back dead into the water.

Toward eleven o'clock, Lucy noticed that Lettie was tired and asked Merrill to take her home. Captain Varenus winked and smiled and Emma got up at once to lock the windows and get the house ready for the night. In the shelter of the storm door Merrill, who since seeing Lettie dressed up had become quite pleased with her, tried to make love to her again, but the snow blew through the cracks and she was so afraid that he desisted and was sulky all the way to her mother's shack.

The wedding day was clear and cold, with loads of lightly fallen snow upon the tamaracks and the last frost-bitten sumac berries stippling the roads through the woods. Early in the morning, lanterns were seen swinging from shed to stable and back and forth to the store. The calm that lasts beyond the dawn held the stranded hulks stiffly, with ice in the rigging. The tide was low, so that the frozen river clung to the banks, its crust suspended perilously, and the quick herring gulls darted high above the bared mud flats. The sound of sleigh bells jingled from over the hill and along the shore road by the factory. Pungs were hitched in front of the store and beside the Grange Hall and men could be heard stamping their rubbers on the platform and calling to one another. The





women who arrived early sat by the huge stove in the center of the store to get warm before taking off their wraps. Horses were stabled in the sheds out back and blanketed there, peering at one another between the broken boards and sniffing.

The ceremony was to be performed in the Methodist Church, which stood midway along the board walk, with a clumsy squat pyramid for a belfry and a ship model for a weathervane. Soon after his marriage to Lucy, Captain Varenus had donated a stained glass window to the left of the pulpit, opposite the one Bangs had previously given in memory of his wife. Members of the sewing circle had strung turkey-red bunting along the aisles, and a roaring fire reddened the stovepipe beside the melodeon. In the Grange Hall next door, preparations were more elaborate. Smoke poured from the battered chimney above the kitchen range and Lucy, with the Plummers' hired girl and another loaned by Lena Bangs, who came in later to help, was setting up long tables on sawhorses, folding paper napkins, wiping out thick crockery cups and counting knives and forks. Claude sat in a corner shucking clams and throwing the shells on an old gunnysack the hired girl had placed there for him. At times he dozed, knife in hand, until one of the girls kicked his foot or dropped a bit of bread into his open mouth.



It was unusual for such an event to break the long winter of Steuben and Clarence Bangs was feeling in a more expansive mood even than Captain Varenus, for during the years his brother had stuck doggedly to his schooner, hauling bark south and coming back with loads of empty cans and his keel nearly out of water, Clarence had tried to persuade him to help him run the sardine business and to put his extra money into Steuben property. Bartholomew had given in, and was to have charge of the fleet of sardine boats which visited the weirs along the river and around the bay and brought the fish to the factory landing, making the six-mile run up and down river on the high water, for the rocks were dangerous at half tide. In the old days, Captain Bartholomew had boasted that he was the only man who could bring a two master up the Steuben river without scratching bottom and he had done it more than once in a fog. He said he couldn't stand the smell of gasoline.

"Don't you mind, dearie," (Bangs called everybody around him dearie). "You won't smell gasoline around our factory," Clarence had said.

So the Bangs had joined the wedding celebration, offering to foot the bills for a lobster dinner. Clarence, since Lettie had no father and was employed by him, had insisted also upon giving away the bride and Wallace had sent by mail for the or-

chestration of the wedding march and had taught his orchestra, after many rehearsals, to play it.


All morning, Emma tended store, her lips tight, pretending not to notice what was going on, and only when the church bell began to ring did she cross the street to change her dress. Her face was flushed and she brushed her hair back viciously, scrubbing her neck and arms with cold water from the pump and splashing the floor all around her. Her flesh was solid and her skin smooth and in spite of the fact that she was tall as a man, her hands and feet were small and she stepped lightly when she was not in a temper. When she was ready, she stood in the door of the Grange Hall kitchen making no move to help Lucy and the others. Lucy was tacking up mistletoe and decorating the bride's table with holly. The hired girl cut out doughnuts with the cover of a baking powder tin, testing now and then the iron kettle of fat which was heating on the stove. Jars of preserves lined the window sills, throwing colored reflections upon the faces of the women as they passed. Bumping spasmodically in sacks under the bench were dozens of lobsters, taken alive that morning from the pound. A barrel of cider stood in the corner.

"Humph!" said Emma and turned away again.

All the Plummer relatives and the Bangs family, the postmaster and his wife, the former

doctor and nearly all the old residents of Steuben were invited and those who were not, some transient factory hands who had stayed over the winter, or sailors waiting for open weather, stood around the square to see the bride, as the church bells began to ring. Mrs. Tizzer was in a tearful mood, due to homemade rum, before Bangs drove up in his sleigh to get them. Lettie, wrapped in a heavy coat and cotton muffler, stepped out, her bare arms shivering unseen and her teeth chattering. She dreaded most of all to pass the crowd waiting on the platform of the store, but she waved and smiled as they greeted her with mingled shouts. Bangs' horse shied and Mrs. Tizzer lurched as they went on. At the church, Mrs. Tizzer settled into a back seat and wiped her eyes, talking to herself in an undertone. Lucy took Lettie into the cloakroom to wait for the music to start.

The pianist pulled out all the stops of the cabinet organ, filled the bellows tightly with air, and nodded to the others. Wallace blew the cornet, the two fiddles joined in with vicious down-strokes of the bows, and the first chord of the wedding march sounded. Trembling on Bangs' arm, Lettie stepped through the doorway, pale with fright, a spray of blossoms in her hair. All her neighbors of Steuben, packing the vestry, turned their heads to look at her. She wore the peach-colored silk almost



with dignity, for it was the loveliest she had ever seen, but her slippers and her garters hurt her and she was afraid something would snap or fall, for the clothes did not hang like her own. The music and the faces terrified her but Mr. Bangs urged her along, and just ahead, on the other side, she could see Captain Varenus' yellow beard against Merrill's dark suit, shuffling along at the same ominous pace. Miss Dexter, the Christian Scientist spinster, sitting in front, stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth and hiccupped dryly, like a tall old clock tipped at an angle. Mrs. Tizzer from the back pews wailed aloud, causing the minister to look up from his book and lose his place. Merrill stared straight ahead, blurting a response when his father in his anxiety let out "He does." He was thinking of the woods with criss-crossed tracks and twigs brittle with frost and again of a blood-red maple, shuddering beneath a street lamp, or the smell of a harness shop. The minister stopped and he was pushed toward Lettie. Men and women got up from the pews and crowded around, but Lettie suddenly felt sick to her stomach and swayed against Miss Dexter who happened to be nearby, begging her to take her out.


Victor Perkins, the tinker, saw she was ill and at once became officious, helping her through the crowd by calling "Gangway." Every one stopped

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talking aloud and began to murmur, standing first on one foot and then the other, trying to find out what was wrong.

"It's all right. She'll be back in a minute. She's just a little dizzy, poor girl," said Lucy and they all filed into the Grange Hall next door to get ready for the meal.

In a few moments Lettie did return, smiling shamefacedly and accepting the kisses on her cheek that the most boisterous of the guests forced upon her. Captain Varenus stood arm in arm with Clarence Bangs and Captain Bartholomew, looking almost like a dwarf between two such bulky men. Claude sat gazing at the drummer who was arranging his traps, and laughed when the silver triangle was taken from its box and the cymbals were screwed into place. The drummer had been left out of the orchestra during the service in church, at the suggestion of the minister. Mrs. Tizzer was on a bench in the kitchen where Perkins spied her and brought her a glass of cider, congratulating her in nautical terms and drinking to the health of the bride.

The guests at the head table found their names written on the paper napkins and sat down. There was a scraping of feet and benches on the floor and the hired girls brought in huge basins of steamed clams with pitchers of broth. After that was served



a chowder which Captain Varenus had made himself, it being the one thing he would never trust to the women folk. Lobsters were thrown into the steaming washboilers and covered with seaweed, and the fires in both stoves in the hall, together with the heat from the guests assembled there, made it possible for the least ceremonious to hang their coats on the backs of the chairs and eat with perfect freedom. Shells clattered on the empty platters and were taken to the kitchen, where Mrs. Tizzer, Claude and the hired girls picked them over for the sweet small claws which had been overlooked.

"There are not many ports we haven't dropped anchor in, are there, Bartholomew," Varenus shouted. The voices of all the guests had gradually risen to a higher pitch but the old sea captain had learned to shout against the wind and each word he said could be heard at the other end of the hall.

"Well, I never cruised around Manilla much," replied Bartholomew, slapping Merrill soundly on the back and roaring with laughter. Captain Plummer had lost a vessel there. Clarence Bangs said Steuben was as good as any other place when a man had seen enough of the world and Merrill looked down at his knees. The minister, who had been a carpenter in Millville before he had heard the call to the pulpit, fell in with the trend of the conversation and when the others had finished their



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coffee and doughnuts he got to his feet and, forgetting the bride entirely, welcomed the respective son and brother of the town's two leading citizens back to the town. Steuben, he said, was older than most of the big cities and people could still live there by honest toil.

His words were like a roar in Lettie's ears, for she could scarcely sit upon the bench. When at last the minister looked at her and wandered back to the theme of the occasion, she blushed and tried to stand up, but found the bench too near the table. He raised his empty coffee mug, having quit drinking cider when he left the carpenter's trade, and called upon the company to join him in his best wishes for the health and happiness of the bride. Then he spoke of brotherly love, seeing Varenus and Bangs so friendly, and said old differences could be dropped on an occasion of common rejoicing and the rich and poor unite around the same table.

The benches were pushed back and lined up around the hall and the men and women talked in groups while the floor was being waxed for dancing. Merrill was telling Bartholomew about his friend Toomey.

"He's a good, square Irishman," Merrill said, and his father started to caution him again, then smiled and wiped off his drooping mustache. As the orchestra was tuning up, Mrs. Tizzer came into the

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hall from the kitchen, much perturbed, and beckoned stealthily to Emma. Lucy was nowhere in sight. Emma bristled but the old woman persisted.

"You'd better come out back," she whispered, "Lettie's having trouble."


Angrily Emma followed her to the shed behind the Grange Hall where she found Lettie in great pain. All at once it dawned on her what had taken place. She let go the girl's arm and began to laugh at the top of her voice, stumbling back over the path to the kitchen with tears of laughter rolling down her ruddy cheeks. Seeing Merrill in the doorway, she stood facing him a moment, her eyes bright with mockery, and for the rest of the day was more gay than any one had ever seen her. She danced almost every dance with Captain Bartholomew, leaning on him as he swung her from the floor in his strong arms and drinking cider heartily with him between times. Lucy, reappearing at last, heard what had happened and had Lettie taken to the Plummer house, over paths which the wind had nearly drifted level during the celebration. The girl was placed in the bed which had been prepared as her bridal couch and the doctor was called out from the dance, which was becoming more hilarious each moment. Lucy, whose head was aching, stayed with the girl and stroked her forehead.

The dancers did not stop for supper, but sandwiches, doughnuts and cake were laid out in platters where the guests could find them whenever they were hungry. After dark, when the orchestra was ready to rest from playing waltzes and two-steps, the fiddler stood upon the table and Victor Perkins called the changes for an old square dance.

"Take your partners," he yelled, and Varenus jumped up from his seat to join in. It was then that Lucy and Lettie were missed, but Merrill and his father found other partners and followed the march to the center of the hall. As the thick winter darkness settled around and the men and women who had risen at daybreak could not longer keep from nodding, gradually the horses were brought from the sheds and a solitary pung would jingle over the hill or along the shore. Emma, wrapped in a muffler and hot from continual exercise, jumped in beside Captain Bartholomew who had gallantly offered to drive Mrs. Tizzer home and did not return until after the others had gone home. As she tiptoed to her bedroom she heard Merrill snoring upon an alcove bed in the hallway which Lucy had hastily fixed up.

#### IV

OVERJOYED because Merrill had finally consented to quit his job on the border, Captain Varenus en-



couraged him to take things easy for a while and to spend the days hunting or tending a line of traps he had set. Sometimes in the afternoon, when the sun showed red behind the factory, Merrill would stand in the doorway of the room where Lettie was still in bed, clasping his huge hands behind his back and finding little to say. The smell of medicines made him sick and, whenever he approached the bed, Lettie started nervously. She was mostly in Lucy's care, for the doctor who lived in Steuben had never practiced since he had been in town and although called in emergency cases always was extremely nervous and reluctant to prescribe. Dr. Haskell lived with his wife and her deaf mother who had a Civil War pension and it was said that they only ate one meal a day, of carrots or potatoes or fish that he caught himself. No one knew his story, exactly, but it was generally believed that after a brilliant record in college, years before, he had started to practice in Connecticut and had walked busily up and down the street with his medicine case in his hand, pretending to answer calls. Something had gone wrong with his first case, another person said, and he had lost his nerve. At any rate, his only known source of income was his mother-in-law's pension. With Lettie he was very gentle, because she was patient and submissive and seemed to take as gospel everything he said. Once

in a while his diffidence slipped away, when he was occupied with her, and he ordered this or that in a tone they had not heard from him.

From time to time, old Captain Plummer tried to find out from Merrill just how he stood and to let him know that if he needed money he could have what he wanted, but Merrill answered all the veiled questions noncommittally and when the hunting played out built a small shack for smelt fishing on the dike road beyond Miss Dexter's house, just where the old drawbridge spanned the east fork of the river and the low range of hills spread out to make room for the marsh. There was one room with a bunk and a stove, and another for storing boxes, nets and tackle. Often he stayed there all night, to catch the right tide, and once or twice he made a trip to the border town to arrange with his old boss for shipments.

One afternoon a pung came slowly through the badly broken road which skirted the shore from the east and Merrill hailed it as it passed the shack, riding on the runner as far as the store platform. The pung was loaded with gunnysacks which bulged like sacks of potatoes and was covered with a thick tarpaulin. Merrill was talking effusively with the man beside the driver and Captain Varenus, hearing the sleigh bells and the scuffling of feet, stuck his head out of the doorway.

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"Come out, dad. I want you to meet my friend Charlie Toomey," Merrill said.

"Glad to meet you," said the Captain, shaking hands all round. "Come in and get warm."

The Irishman looked at Merrill who nodded and stepped up beside the driver. "You go on in," he said. "Joe and I'll put up the rig in the barn yonder."

"Tell Lucy we'll have company for supper," Varenus yelled after him with his shrill voice that pierced the wind.

They drove the pung into the large and almost empty stables and shut the rolling doors, leading the steaming horses to stalls which had been long unused. Merrill pitched down a few forkfuls of hay from the loft while the teamster walked nervously around the load, trying the ropes and the chain at the tailboard.

The guests went to bed right after supper, saying they must get an early start, and right after daybreak they started out along the road by the sardine factory, continuing along the shore, although Varenus urged them to cut through town and take the county road beyond the station. He couldn't understand why a man should be hauling potatoes at that time of year, but he never tried to tell a foreigner about his own business.

Even Lucy had a distrust of Catholics and



seemed uneasy while the strangers were there. She thought during the night that she had heard noises in the barn. Lucy slept in the room next to Lettie's, who often was frightened in the night, for in the corner stood the stuffed freak calf with a head and body shaped like a pig, a squat, half-malicious looking animal that glared at her continually with amber-colored eyes. She wanted to ask Lucy to have it taken away but knowing it was one of Merrill's most cherished possessions, was too weak and timid to do so. Only at night, when the light caught the eyes, she cried out. Lucy almost always heard her and came in to reassure her. Lucy also found time to go to Mrs. Tizzer's shack, where the old woman who suffered a great deal from toothache sat moaning by the window with the bed unmade and dirty dishes piled up in the sink.

One day Merrill passed the doorway of the upstairs sitting room and saw Lucy inside, knitting a muffler for the old woman to tie around her jaw with hot flannels.

"We don't realize how well off we are," she sighed. She sat knitting and murmuring to herself. Miss Dexter, dressed in black, her gaunt wrists protruding from a worn fur muff, walked past on the way to the library. Since Emma had taken charge, Miss Dexter had been hired infrequently to help at busy times but she was so nervous with

Emma's eyes upon her that she dropped bags of beans and let the kerosene run over whenever she tried to wait on a customer.

"It's a pity they couldn't keep her in the store," Lucy said. "She needs the money so."

Merrill said nothing. He kept out of the store as much as possible, except when a hogshhead had to be moved or a stove set up. As he heaved heavy sacks on his shoulder or tossed boxes of canned goods to the high shelves he would look belligerently at Emma, who was very strong herself, and go out without saying a word. Emma kept the books and did the ordering and shut off from credit some of the folks she considered worthless. Not long after the wedding, she asked her father if he didn't think she was worth just a little more money than Miss Dexter and he told her to help herself. They were making more money than ever before and the more they made, the closer Emma watched all the little ways in which a few cents might be wasted.

The spinster disappeared around the corner and Lucy went on talking, aimlessly.

"There's a ringing in my ears, like a sea-shell," she said. "That means something is going wrong."

"Everything can't go right," said Merrill.


"I'll tell you what's the trouble," Lucy said, suddenly. "From this window where I sit I can see my own little house, with the back all knocked

off, and I can't bear to look at it. I want it torn down, so I can forget, but I hate to say a word to Varenus."

"I'll fix that," said Merrill. And the next morning early he started out with an armful of tools. Within a few days he had demolished the Maxwell cottage and stacked the lumber out behind the Plummer stable. He liked hard work, and found it increasingly difficult to pass the time, but he wouldn't hire out to any one in town and his father didn't want him to. Varenus was busier than ever, sending goods to the lumber camps, buying up odd lots of logs or timber land and going on mysterious errands which aroused more and more Emma's curiosity. In March, while the snow was still deep, Merrill hitched up the sleigh to meet his father, who had been to Bangor on business and was returning by the afternoon train. As he drove up to the door, with Claude dangling his legs over the tailboard, he stopped in a moment to see if Lucy had any errands for him to do. As he opened the door, Lettie, who had dressed for the first time since her wedding day, stood at the head of the stairs, smiling timidly and trembling a little in her legs.

"Why don't you take Lettie along?" said Lucy. "The air would do her good."

So Lettie was bundled into coats and mufflers



and placed beside Merrill on the seat. The sleigh was drawn up the hill, past the last windows of the village, and on the summit the horse stopped of his own accord to rest. They turned around in the seat, silent and embarrassed, gazing at the bleak coastline, with rocky ledges and promontories, the river clogged beneath a covering of snow. Together they saw the sullen expanse of water meeting an overcast sky. Wharves and factories fringed the coves, the roofs and shrouded fruit trees were half-hidden in the gullies. At the extreme tip of land, the lighthouse set itself against the wind and tide.

"The days are getting longer," Lettie said, and the horse at the sound of her voice ducked his head and started down the long slope toward the station.

## v

SOON after she was able to leave her bed, where she had stayed much longer than she had thought was necessary because the doctor had urged her to keep off her feet, Lettie began helping Lucy with small tasks around the house. Lucy spent most of the time making preserves or relishes or preparing fancy desserts and puddings she learned from the magazines. The more decorative dishes on the table interested her most, so she left to the hired girl, a native, the cooking of the fish and vegetables and

even the selection of the meat from the butcher who called with his wagon once a week. Formerly the Plummers had kept enough stock so that they could kill their own meat and had had a stable full of blooded horses, but as Captain Varenus had sold the land, always at a profit, he had reduced his live stock to a few Jersey cows and a yard full of Brahma hens of which he was very proud. Lettie was careful to do whatever Lucy suggested, and she scrubbed the pans or dusted the chairs more thoroughly than she had been accustomed to do, not because she saw any use in it, but solely to please Lucy.

In the weeks following the wedding, Lucy had become increasingly sorry for Mrs. Tizzer, alone and unkempt in her shanty, and since it worried her day and night had convinced Varenus that it was their duty to bring the old woman into the house. So Mrs. Tizzer was installed in the room above the kitchen.

On the day Mrs. Tizzer arrived Captain Bartholomew in talking with Emma in the store had mentioned some weirs he was to build between the islands in the river, two or three miles downstream. Herring had been running well all year, but the currents had shifted and some of the weirs along the shore were beginning to play out. At once Emma hinted that she would like to make a trip

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with him on the sardine boat. Since she had begun handling the money in the store, and her own savings had mounted up, she was more and more anxious to do business on her own account. She knew her father and other men for whose judgment she had increasingly less respect, made money. The Bangs were getting more and more of a hold in the section of town around the factory. The old resentment she had felt as a girl because of her sex returned and the fact that her twin brother did nothing at all and still was given the best of everything inflamed her dislike for Merrill. Each week she took from the cash drawer, as recompense for what she did, a larger amount, reasoning that she was entitled to it because the receipts were larger and recalling that her father had told her to help herself. But the more she acquired, the more she was impelled to be secretive about it. There was no reason, she thought, why she should not build a weir or two, if she could find any one to tend them who would keep his mouth shut.

"Supposing we get stranded and have to stay all night?" Captain Bartholomew asked. She looked straight at him, indignant not because of his words but on account of her silent thoughts about the family.

"I can take care of myself," she replied. "And don't you think I can't."



Captain Varenus was in a cheerful frame of mind and urged her to go, so she walked across the dike to the factory landing and stepped into the stern of the gasoline yacht which Bangs had bought from some rich man who summered on the islands and had converted into a sardine boat. All the way down stream, between the hay fields, sweet grass and the groves of trees which skirted the banks, Bartholomew pointed out to her where the weirs might be placed and each moment Emma felt more and more in a trap, since she could think of not a single man she could trust with her affairs. The man from the Bangor bank who called periodically to take the money from the store on deposit had opened a private account for her, thinking it not at all strange. She believed Bartholomew would be discreet but still she could not bring herself to confide in him. The sunshine tinged her cheeks and her high forehead and the breeze, as they sped between the rocks, made her eyes more bright, but she reached home baffled and impatient, to find old Mrs. Tizzer installed there. She flew into a temper and sent the hired girl away, saying they couldn't afford to keep the whole town.

"You ought not to talk that way, Emma. Other people have feelings just as you do," Lucy had said, trembling but more firm than she had ever been before. It was the first open clash be-

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tween them. Captain Varenus came in and Emma turned on him.

"That precious son of yours ought to pay his board," she said. "The rest of us have to work hard enough." Varenus was afraid that Merrill would hear and leave again and tried to quiet her.

"We'll get more help in the store," he said. "Any time you say the word."

"You talk as though we were millionaires," she said and brushed them all aside to leave the room as she began to cry.

"There, there," said Varenus. But the hired girl quit, saying there were too many bosses for her anyway, and Lettie took on more of the work. Indeed she seemed quite happy to be constantly occupied and hummed about the house gayly except when Merrill was in a sulky mood, as he often was between the times when Toomey drove through town and stopped overnight to rest his horses.

"I don't know what's the matter," she told her mother, who scolded her for her lack of affection. "We can't seem to get acquainted."


"Pshaw! A big, strong girl like you. Some women aren't so lucky," her mother replied.

In the mornings, Lettie swept and dusted. She helped Lucy in the afternoons, and drove the cows back from the pasture at nightfall, helping Claude with the milking. The neighbors saw her in an

apron with a basin of mush in her arms, to throw to the hens, or running back and forth to the store on errands. This Lettie dreaded more than anything else, for she shrank from facing Emma who sensed her fear and made her feel it, always. Lettie was the only one in the house who took the slightest interest in Claude, and would sew on his buttons and shout commonplace remarks into his ear, correcting his misunderstandings again and again.

They all went to the plains in the blueberry season but this time the Captain had to hire only one outside picker, Vic Perkins, who worked beside Lettie and her mother, talking to them constantly about the weather and the country, the iniquity of machinery and the rights of man. The crop was plentiful and the weather superb. Merrill did the work of two or three men, hardly straightening his back from daylight until dark, and sleeping like a log at night, with none of the nervousness he displayed when he was idle. Bangs had no trouble from the inspector at the factory, the fish ran more plentifully than usual and all the Steuben folk were cheered by the prospect of a good season, buying more liberally from the store and paying their old bills. Captain Varenus turned the winnower, the chaff catching in his beard, urging the pickers to race with each other.

"Always at the wheel, Varenus," said Clarence



Bangs as he passed by unexpectedly one day to see if any berries from the wormy lots were being mixed into the loads sent to the factory. "No need for you to work, with a crew like that." The Captain laughed.

"I haven't noticed any barnacles on your stern, Clarence," Varenus retorted. "When are you goin' to retire?"

## VI


CAPTAIN VARENUS' grandfather had been one of the organizers of the first Steuben fair and since that time the Plummers had taken a prominent part each year. Recently they had had little stock to exhibit, but that was generally true throughout the countryside. The interest centered on the races and the amusements, and Varenus had a booth where he sold clam chowder and sweet corn, and sometimes coffee and doughnuts. Until just after his second marriage, he had entered a horse in the gig race, but Lucy had asked him to give up racing because of the gambling, after he had had a bad fall. This year Merrill, always anxious to find something to occupy his time for a few days, had made a deal with a man from Cherryville to combine his stuffed freaks with a live sheep whose neck was so crooked it had to kneel in order to eat grass.

"What a pity they let it die," he said again

and again, as he handled the pig-headed calf. "A man could have made a fortune." He told the story of its birth to every one and the neighbors, brought up with livestock and seeing so much birth and death, invariably were impressed and wondered how such a thing could happen.

All afternoon Lettie and her mother had been cleaning out the tarboard booth on the Fairway next to the restaurant, while the Captain hauled in clams for the chowder and Emma shucked the corn and got things ready in her father's booth nearby. She locked the corn into large packing cases and stuck the key in her apron pocket, mistrusting the popcorn men, merry-go-round proprietors, jugglers, vendors of key-rings and the jockeys who traveled from Fair to Fair throughout the autumn and had a standing feud with the townspeople wherever they went. The itinerants camped on the Fair grounds at night, so everything had to be kept under lock and key. In past years Captain Varenus had slept on the floor of his booth, so as to get going early in the morning, but he said he was too old for that and Mrs. Tizzer had ridden home with them in the back of the wagon, leaving Lettie to come alone.

During the long summer, Lettie's pallor had given way to a rich dark tan which, with her large black eyes, made her look almost like a Portuguese



girl. The weeks had restored her strength, but her movements were quick and nervous and her speech apologetic. Doctor Haskell, who had been loitering around the stable, saw her start toward the back road and called to her. He had been asking questions of the jockeys and stockmen, stepping this way and that to keep out of the way, his derby, too large for him, on the back of his head and his long, slender ear-lobes hanging far below the rim. The only steady work he did each year was to camp on the islands in Harrington Bay for a few days in the early fall and gather a dory load of island cranberries which his wife sold to the women to make jelly. He loved horses and often stood in the door of the Plummer stable while Claude groomed the horses or cleaned the stalls. When a mare was ready to give birth to a colt, sometimes he would help and the neighbors admitted he had a way with animals. He should have been a veterinary, they said.

"Hello, Lettie," he said. "Looks like a good day to-morrow."

Behind them stood the gaunt gateway of two-by-fours in the form of an "H," on the edge of the plain. Beyond the Fair grounds the sun glowed through the fringe of evergreens. The fields were rich with goldenrod and asters, fading with the light, and the woods had commenced to turn, first russet and yellow, then here and there a slash of



vermilion. In front could be seen the smokestack of the factory and a segment of its tarboard roof, with gulls circling overhead.

"They're going to have a good day for the Fair," the doctor repeated.

"That's good," said Lettie, but the doctor saw she was uneasy.


"What's wrong?" he asked. "You're not ailing again?"

"I can't bear to stay around that pig-headed calf all day. Once when I touched it, I thought it moved. I covered it with a gunnysack while I was sweeping, and the sack slipped off so that when I turned around the eyes were staring at me. And that two-headed calf is almost as bad," she said. She had grown used to the doctor and spoke more freely with him than with any one else.

"Shucks, Lettie. That's only a pair of twins that got hitched together. Still, all the twins don't get along as well as that. Merrill and Emma, for instance," the doctor said, almost like a question. He was curious about all his neighbors.

"It makes Merrill mad when any one calls him a twin," Lettie said.

They stood on the crest of the western hill, with the factory and the stiff row of workers' houses below, the roofs all black with tarboard, the walls dark red with boat paint Bangs had bought at



an auction. The big sardine boat was anchored at the wharf and bucket loads of silver fish were being hoisted from the hold to the chute through which they flowed into the receiving bin. Only the chug-chug of the hoisting engine, the creak of the chain around the drum and the cry of the gulls which swooped down to snatch the refuse could be heard in the immense stillness which the approach of evening had settled upon the village. The dories in the river floated at full length of their moorings, all pointed upstream at the angle of the tide, and the smells of bayberry and sweetfern from the woods mingled with that of the salt air and coarse grasses on the marshland. Lettie began to cry.


"Every time I pass the factory I feel this way," she said. "I have everything I want, but I can't live with so many strangers. When Merrill isn't home I eat in the kitchen with ma, but Lucy says, 'You mustn't let your husband see you eating in the kitchen like a servant. You're a lady now, just as good as the rest of us.' So I have to go into the dining room and I can't touch a mouthful."

"You're still excited from your sick spell," the doctor said, rubbing his hands together. His hands were pink and small and he washed them in scalding water a dozen times each day. "It's all right working in the factory when you're young, but you won't always be young, Lettie. There are lots

of girls would jump at your chance. Still it's nice to be independent."

Along the high road north of the valley, which cut in just below them, they saw Vic Perkins, the tinker, striding along, and they started walking, to meet him at the intersection. He was known from one end of the county to the other, tramping from town to town with his tools and a lunch in a sack on his back, eating by the roadside and mending tanks, wash-boilers, pumps, window-panes, whatever needed fixing. He would never take a steady job. For the Plummers he had installed an electric bell to ring when the door of the store was open and he was the only one who could change the combination of the cash drawer, but no one mistrusted him. He debated with himself on the long country roads and growled when he saw a road roller edge a buggy into the ditch. Perkins sneered, as well, when he saw a lobster man tinkering with a rusty engine and would never try his hand at repairing it. Oars and sail were good enough for him.

"There's Vic, now," the doctor said. "Nobody tells him where to eat." But before the tinker approached, Doctor Haskell said hesitantly to Lettie, "You might mention at home that you saw me," for Varenus had not paid him a cent. It was often the case, when he was called upon, for nobody considered him a regular doctor.




They continued together down the hill and across the dike which seemed barely able to hold off the tide on either side from the narrow and dusty strip of road. The usual crowd of factory girls and villagers were gathered around the post-office doors waiting for the evening mail. Some of the girls waved to Victor and shouted something which the breeze turned back. The store was still open, selling soft drinks and small articles to the men and women getting ready for the Fair. Lettie was thirsty and would like to have joined the girls, but she went on, saying good night as she turned toward the Plummer driveway. Perkins sat on the store platform to rest and she heard his voice as she entered the house quietly through the kitchen door.

The evening air had been chill along the dike, where the mists rose weirdly in the hollows, so she sat by the range a moment listening to the voices in the square. As she rested there, the orchestra, which had been augmented by the government blueberry inspector with his clarinet, started playing in the Bangs house across the valley and the veering breeze brought the sounds now sharply, now faintly, as if a band was marching erratically through the streets. Everywhere outside, it seemed to Lettie, there was peace and gayety, in the cottages where the women sat sewing while their husbands read or smoked their pipes, in Bangs' yellow

house behind the sardine factory, in front of the store and around the post office. Only in the long, empty house in which she found herself, with its succession of rooms and hallways and its smoldering quarrels, was there loneliness and anxiety. She wanted to cry again, but merely sat there, tired and unresistant.

At last she mounted to her mother's room by the back stairs and found her sound asleep in the narrow bed. Lettie undressed by the light which filtered through the blinds, a beam of which fell across her mother's face. The lines in Mrs. Tizzer's cheeks had relaxed. She had enjoyed the day and would enjoy the morrow. In some mysterious way luck had turned for her, when she had least expected it, and as her life had been so hazardous and varied, she was now abandoning herself to tranquillity. Each time she heard the factory whistle blow in the morning she would turn contentedly in her bed, wake up just long enough to let a derisive smile cross her countenance, and then go deeply to sleep again for half an hour. After the others were through breakfast, she would pour a cup of coffee for herself from the back of the stove and, her hair still awry, sit in the rocking chair with her back against the water-boiler. Later in the day, she was ready to help with the work, but she allowed herself an easy start. When her feet hurt her, she



got some cornplasters from the store, at an hour when Emma was out, but she had given up snuff because she suspected Lucy would not like it. Her principal concern was to keep Lettie up to scratch which she did in her own fashion when they were alone and more restrainedly when Lucy was in hearing.

For a long time Lettie could not go to sleep, although her arms and legs ached from her work and the long walk. There was little room on the bed, as her mother was placed, but she did not want to wake her and be sent to her own room. At last she dozed off and dreamed she was walking up a hill by the seashore in a strange town and a lot of men in faded jumpers, dwarfs with black faces, were wrangling ahead of her. When she looked more closely, she saw that there were children among them and that the children were striking and the older ones resisting. She turned to go down the hill to avoid them and a single dwarf, with a blank face smeared with coal dust, edged over from the side of the road and stopped her. She stood still and he tried to talk in a threatening way, but either no sound came or the language was foreign to her. Then he reached into his blouse and brought out a queer tool, a short, flat trowel. She ran down the hill and he threw it up into the air, in the darkness. She ran slowly, thinking of the trowel flying



through the air and that if she held back it would land beyond her.

Her mother shook her.

"Go back to your bed. I hear Merrill's voice outside."

Men were talking in the yard and harness buckles rattled. Lettie peered through the blinds sleepily and saw the top of a large wagon covered with tarpaulin and the backs of two horses. A lantern was lighted at the stable door. Every few weeks since she had lived in the Plummer house, Toomey and the teamster named Joe had driven there by the shore road, arriving after dark, had slept in the loft and gone on at daylight. She had said nothing about it because Merrill always got angry when any one asked questions about Toomey.

Lettie waited a moment, to see if Merrill was coming in, and then, taking her clothes on her arm, hurried along the hallway and entered their bedroom where the pedestal on which the pig-headed calf ordinarily stood was missing, leaving a gap in the corner. She opened the bed and got in between the cold sheets, trying to control the chattering of her teeth, and in a short time heard the footsteps of the men die out on the driveway as they went over toward the store.

"Good evenin', Toomey," she heard Captain Plummer shout.

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She did not get warm as quickly as she should, and several times after she thought she had stopped shivering, a quick shudder tugged at her body like an unseen fish hooked for a moment, then lost in its own strange world. A long time she waited, and she could still hear voices at the store, the tinker's among them. She was wide awake and restless, although it was only ten o'clock. Finally she got up and put on her clothes, tiptoeing down the back stairs to the kitchen. The stable door had been left open, although the wagon was inside. By the light of the lantern hanging on the post, she could see that the tarpaulin had been turned back a little and that under it were the usual gunnysacks with their bulging load. She did not like to be alone downstairs, for fear some one would come and find her there, so she decided to go to the store, where there were still plenty of people, and to stay until Merrill got ready to come home.

As she stepped onto the driveway, Emma came out of the store and stood upon the platform talking with the teamster. They made a move as if they were coming in her direction so Lettie instinctively dodged into the stable door and in her confusion backed up until her shoulder touched one of the gunnysacks.

She screamed and ran in terror down the driveway, and was caught at the sidewalk in a man's

arms. It was Perkins. Others were running past them toward the stable.

"It moved," she shrieked and tried to break away and run again.

"Who left that door open?" Toomey said and swore.

Merrill hurried back to where she stood with Perkins.


"What's wrong with you? What were you doing in the barn?"

The stable door closed and Toomey stepped out, leaving Joe inside, and before he came to where the others were, Lettie saw something glisten which he put into his pocket.

"Keep your shirt on, Merrill," he said, and seeing Perkins, "Who's this?"

They went over to the platform, Merrill holding tight to Lettie's arm. She felt his heart pounding and sweat was on his forehead. "It's nothing. She just got frightened in the dark," he said. Then he joined Toomey again, and they talked in an undertone, motioning to Joe.

"What? You're not going to stay the night?" Captain Varenus said. "What's the matter with my hay?" But he was glad to be rid of them. Merrill was a grown man and the Captain didn't like to pry into anybody's business, but he distrusted all Irishmen and strangers and a man who picked



the long roads for his hauling and came back empty couldn't, in his opinion, have enough common sense to be trusted. But like all the smarter men in that part of the country, Captain Plummer never liked to appear to know too much nor to give advice unless it was asked for. He knew that some people were shrewder than others and believed that explained why they got along so much better. Since he could use another team of horses part time, he had bought an extra pair to rent to Toomey when he needed them and kept the ones Toomey brought down from the border until they were picked up on the return trip. The extra horses were hitched, and soon the wagon with its load drove to the cross-roads and Toomey got aboard. Vic Perkins watched them go over the hill by the factory, then slung his knapsack over his shoulder and started for the shack in which he slept, shaking his head.

"Queer goings on," he said to himself.


It was some time before things quieted down completely, and Merrill paced the platform like a bear. Emma closed the back of the store as Claude lugged out the empty milk cans and left them in rows outside.

The few remaining villagers dispersed and went home, planning for an early rising for the Fair or to tend their weirs and lobster pots at low water. A half mile down the shore road, the tinker trudged

along, vaguely uneasy because unexplainable facts had intruded upon a scene he knew so well. The moon was full and he stopped along the dike in its light, thumbing his pocket almanac. The next night brought the low run tide, when the tops of ledges and derelicts otherwise submerged cropped up in unexpected quarters and the clam diggers edged out an extra fifteen yards past the regular tide line. For a long time he sat on the doorstep of his shanty, talking to himself and running his fingers through his hair.

## VII

As soon as the merry-go-round started, Claude was astride one of the wooden horses, leaning inward as he circled round and round and holding his heels tight against the painted belly of his mount. An Italian shoveled coal beneath the boiler and the steam organ wheezed two alternate tunes, one a nondescript quickstep such as circus bands play before the show begins, the other a shrill travesty of the Light Cavalry overture. It was the latter that Claude liked and remembered, for he could hear the weird sounds forced through rusty pipes as the artificial snare drums rattled, and he had never outgrown his passion to ride. On the first morning of the Fair, the attendance was not large, since the principal events were scheduled for the




second day, and for a time he was the only customer. When the merry-go-round stopped, he would not trouble to dismount, but sat upon the horse until the lever was pulled back and the machine started slowly. When his money was gone, he went to the booth where his father was ladling out chowder and buttering corn, to ask for another handful of dimes.

As he came around facing the Fairway, clutching his horse's stiff mane, Claude confronted the poster of the side-show and heard the voice of Merrill's partner urging the folks to come inside. A canvas had been spread on the floor and fresh-pulled grass strewn around and on its knees the sheep with the twisted neck snatched a mouthful from time to time and bleated. The two-headed calf and the calf shaped like a pig were mounted on stands covered with bunting and Merrill explained the way in which their various organs were joined or bifurcated to the farm hands who wandered in. Lettie sat at a small table outside to make change, yawning and drowsy in the sun.

Gaudy colors lined the Fairway and the thud of the baseball and the grunts of the African dodger could be heard when the merry-go-round was still, punctuated with feeble reports from the shooting gallery. Opposite Captain Plummer's booth were displayed rows of Indian dolls and blankets, articles



in birch bark and cherry wood and gewgaws of dyed feathers. The tables were being set in the large restaurant and some acrobats were practising stunts on the platform by the judges' stand. Before noon, Emma, who had opened the store for a few hours in the morning, drove through the gate with Captain Bartholomew. One or two of the race horses, blanketed and wearing blinders, were being led up and down by the stables for exercise. Most of the factory hands arrived in time for lunch, as Clarence Bangs had closed up until the Fair was over and was, as usual, to be one of the judges at the races. Merrill and his partner had a bottle of whisky hidden in a packing case and had invited Captain Varenus more than once to step inside. With a little courage from the liquor, Merrill had been induced to try his hand at barking while the owner of the sheep took a stroll around the Fair grounds, but he felt awkward facing his neighbors and did little except to thump upon a post with a mallet and converse across the way with the proprietor of a bowling game. At Merrill's right was a little Jew selling Coney Island chewing candy, pink and white, which he broke up and put into small paper bags. He had been to the Steuben Fair for several years and knew all the regular comers by name. The Jew traveled with an older one-eyed man who had formerly worked in a circus and had



a stamping machine to make initialed key rings and door plates. The latter wore a stovepipe hat, a frock coat and a huge brass watch chain with a horse's head for a charm dangling on his colored vest.

Captain Varenus, relieved from the chowder booth by Emma, made the rounds with Merrill's partner, treating him with the cordiality he always showed to those his son was interested in. The prize cattle were being watered and fed, lowing in the stalls beyond the stables, and they paused at the race-track rail to see a gig make a trial heat, the ankles of the pacing mare carefully wrapped with tape. A few yards away, Doctor Haskell watched the finish eagerly, looking at his watch, which was an heirloom and had to be wound in the back, with a key.

"How can you time a horse by that old turnip?" yelled Captain Varenus. The doctor looked pleased that some one had noticed him but he could think of nothing to reply. Often in the evening, while his wife was reading, the exact words he should have said to get the best of some one in the course of the day would come to him and he would slap his leg with dismay.

Captain Plummer paused again at the counter where toy ships were sold, carefully modeled and rigged with twine. He cocked his head to one side

as he checked up the different sails and jibs and explained them to his companion who had never been to sea.

"I don't wonder the young men nowadays don't know exactly what to do with themselves," he said, thinking of Merrill. "My son's the first Plummer who wasn't master of his own ship."

Gradually the feeling of a holiday pervaded the Fair grounds, the crowds promenading up and down the Fairway, the steam organ snorting, and the Ferris wheel describing slowly its lofty arc. Merrill regained his spirits, after his restless night, and Lettie, seated behind the cash box, greeted her friends from the factory, losing for the first time the shyness she had developed since she was parted from them. In broad daylight and surrounded by people her fear of the freaks passed away. Bangs genially called her his step-daughter and pinched her cheek, and her mother chatted incessantly with the little Jew who knew the towns along the waterfront which had been familiar to Mrs. Tizzer of old. The women ate at the first table, for although the Plummers sold food, they invariably patronized the restaurant with the other exhibitors and greeted the large, deep-voiced woman who ran it from year to year. Merrill and his father were among the last in the dining room and had the place pretty much to themselves.

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"How would you like to sell a patch of blueberry land?" asked Merrill after a long silence. The old captain tried to cover his surprise but his eyes snapped merrily as he pretended not to understand.

"That depends," he said. "It's worth quite a bit more than it cost, by now. And I'm kind of fussy about who gets in on the plains."

They agreed on a price, Varenus making it as low as he could without appearing too anxious, delighted that his son was showing an interest in Steuben and was anchoring himself to his native countryside. After all, the captain reflected, he himself had seen more than half the world before he settled down. The old man was pleased, too, that Merrill seemed to have money, for since he had left the border he had given no hint as to what his resources were and Varenus, as much as he would have liked to help him, shrank from opening up the subject. His face did not change when Merrill reached into his shirt and counted out twelve hundred dollars.

"The lawyer from Millville's here. Perhaps he'll fix us up a deed. We'll never have a better chance," said Merrill. So in the sideshow tent that afternoon, Lawyer Grey, using the packing case for a table, drew up a simple document and saw it duly signed. As they were gathered around, the partner

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remaining outside with Lettie, Emma stuck her head in the booth, unexpectedly.

"What's going on here?" she asked. "Do you think I want to tend that booth all day?" The Captain had forgotten about his sweet corn and chowder in his excitement. At the moment, the scene did not impress her, but later in the afternoon, in the rickety grandstand, she remembered that Lawyer Grey was there and believed she had seen papers passed. At once she began to fret and to wonder what was being done behind her back. The day in the open, surrounded by acquaintances she had not seen for months, awakened the restless feeling she had had in her school days and later as she had roamed through the Plummer homestead alone during the long afternoons. She had longed to take some part in the mysterious activities of the men, the successful ones. Now she knew that slaving over a counter or working in a factory was no satisfaction for her. At the end of the day she was tired and even as she closed the store, had to begin to think of opening it up again. She believed she was more capable than her father of doing business on a large scale. Even aboard a boat, she was of more use than most men. But to do business on a large scale, she must have a man to act for her and in the whole crowd at the Fairgrounds she could not think of one she could trust. Bartholomew wanted what they all

wanted. He liked her looks and her quick, almost involuntary, response akin to anger when he put his arm around her or held her shoulders in a grip she could not break.

"It's a pity for such a woman as you to have to work, Emma," he had said when he had noticed her weariness in the store. "It isn't natural."


Sometimes she thought she would like to leave Steuben and live as she pleased in the distant cities her father and her uncles had talked of when she was a girl, but when she had been away for a few days at a time she had always felt out of place. She could not sleep too far inland and although even her mother had made a voyage or two to Jamaica and Constantinople, the schooners now were rotting at the wharves and the men who used to sail them were growing old and musing on better days.

At sundown the buggies and blue farm wagons hitched side by side behind the grandstand began to pass through the gate in a single file and took the various roads to the surrounding towns, showing upon the contours of the hillsides, some just across the valley, others on a distant divide. The clouds, in long horizontal strata, which had clung to the horizon all day, now sailed out in loose formation toward the middle reaches of the sky, gleaming and palpitating with light. In streaks between them the sky was vivid green and across the



hemisphere, where a dove-gray mist always lurked above the sea, was a fainter echo in pastel tints and blended indefinite shapes. Cleft by a stark upright of the gateway, the sun writhed upon the hilltops, a vermilion ball, and then the colors cooled and the air cooled with them and Merrill, standing in front of the sideshow, watched until the hills grew dim in the upper valley and the smell of frying haddock turned him to the cook-shack. He had kept Lettie with him, to guard the property, and in the loft had prepared a bed upon the floor, bringing hay from the stables and spreading the quilts and blankets upon it. She had been happier that day, turning lightly from one mood to another, and felt even a sort of protection in Merrill, whom old acquaintances had greeted so cordially that he had taken on a new importance in her eyes. The gayest day was still to come, and the wry-necked sheep, which had made her nervous when it nibbled too close to the edge of the shack, had been taken to the stable for the night.

Within the circumference of the merry-go-round, a fire had been lighted and over it a pot boiled, suspended from a tripod. The Italians sat on the ground around it, laughing, counting the coins in their small canvas sacks and joking with the acrobats who were eating in a tent nearby. The Jew and the old circus man sat together in a corner



of the restaurant, their differences in size accentuated by the shadows they threw upon the canvas top and sides. The Ferris wheel and the roof of the grandstand protruded above the line of the hills. By the stable a group of drivers were playing cards on a horse blanket, and up and down the now-deserted Fairway, stepping softly and daintily on the grass, the winning mare was being led by her owner, who held her head and talked to her in an undertone until the stars came out.

Sitting on the edge of the boardwalk, his knees clasped in his hairy hands, Merrill watched the dimming activity of the camp, telescoped with memories of years leading back to his boyhood. He felt the deed in his shirt pocket beneath his arm, thought of mornings when with his father he had turned up the teeming mud with his clamfork, throwing aside the big ones and racing to get his basket filled first. All his thoughts changed shapes and colors and drifted in a sort of sky in which a resolve to help his father and to take his place in the community alternately glowed and cooled as the sun had done.

The acrobats, having finished supper, entered the ring of the merry-go-round and joined the circle there, to which had been added some of the stable boys. One of the acrobats, a tall Portuguese, began doing tricks, in his civilian shirt and trousers. The

others followed suit, laughing and trying to outdo one another. Lettie, who had been sitting beside Merrill on the walk, stood up to watch them eagerly. The largest of them seized one of their women by the waist and lifted her into the air on the palm of one hand, balanced at arm's length, holding her aloft until she squealed to come down.

Suddenly Lettie felt herself seized in a similar way and with a cry she mounted into the air on Merrill's hand, as the veins stood out on his forehead. The little Jew applauded and the group in the merry-go-round turned in time to see her held there, skirts thrown back, before Merrill let her drop to earth again.

"I'll show them," he muttered.

The fire died down and one by one the lights went out. Merrill lighted his lantern and led Lettie through the room where the freaks stood under burlap. She clung to his arm, still flushed from her unexpected acrobatics. The hay was fragrant and pricked slightly through the blankets and for the first time, pleasantly exhausted and in utter solitude, she did not shrink from Merrill as he reached for her. For a long time afterwards she lay, limp and astonished, sinking gradually into the deepest sleep.

## VIII

SHE was awakened by knocking and a shout from the restaurant next door.

"What do you want?" It was the voice of the one-eyed key ring man.

There were footsteps on the walk.

"Where's Plummer?"

Lettie in terror grabbed Merrill who was still sound asleep. It was pitch dark, for there were no windows in the loft. People were stirring in the buildings all around.

"Where's Plummer?"

Merrill coming out of sleep recognized the voice of Joe, the teamster, and sprang to his feet, tearing all the clothes from the bed.

"What do you want?"

"Come down," Joe said.

As Merrill started pulling on his trousers and his boots in the dark, Lettie cried and tried to hold his arm. "Don't leave me alone," she wailed. He shoved her clear of him, and stumbled for the stairway, then as she began to shriek, came back, tripping on the blankets, shook her by the shoulders and told her to keep quiet.

Downstairs Merrill fumbled with the padlock. His match burned out, and the teamster paced the grass beside the board walk. A light flickered up-

stairs in the restaurant and the large woman pried loose a window which swung inward on a hinge.


"Who's there?" she bellowed, to reassure the frightened waitresses behind her.

"It's all right. It's Merrill," he said, above the creak of the door he had succeeded in opening.

He started walking with Joe to get out of hearing before a word was said.

"Toomey's caught," said the teamster. "We've got to get out of here." Behind them they heard Lettie begin to scream.

They hurried in the direction of the grandstand, away from the gate, keeping in the shadow, and took the road almost arched over with alders and woodbine which led downhill to the river. The valley narrowed, after the east branch of the stream wound its way through the woods and the marshes back of town. Near the Fair grounds, where the rise and fall of the tide was considerably reduced by the slope, there had been one or two saw-mills. The road brought Merrill and the teamster to the ruins of one of these. They could no longer see the grandstand nor hear a sound except that of the water slapping under the stern of a skiff which was tied to the old landing. The moon had risen through the fog bank on the eastern horizon but a blanket of mist crept over the river and through the tree tops, falsifying shapes and amplifying the



slightest sound. Merrill walked between the soggy piles of sawdust to the landing, with the teamster close behind. He had no plan, for his mind, aching like his body for sleep and oblivion, had resisted the impact of the news he had heard. His memory clung to solitary places, pine groves in the woods in winter with the snow matted in the branches and the trunks like pillars in a cathedral, strange roads scrawled on the hillsides, the deck of a schooner made fast at night to a wharf on the edge of a strange city. Without his volition, his thoughts gathered slowly around Trafton's Island, three miles out to sea, where the wind had swept the scrubby trees backward as a man might comb his hair. It was there he had caught the big flounder. He remembered a beach of boulders, each as big as his head, rumbling, and caves worn by the surf in the ledges on the high side. The sheep, having seen no men for months, were wild. Or had they all been stolen?

"What'll we do?" asked Joe, impatient to get along.

Merrill motioned him to be still. The slapping of the tide against the tender focused his attention on the skiff and he noticed that a motor boat was moored alongside in the channel.

"We've got to get out of here," he said. He would be safe with the long blue stretch of the



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bay behind him and the open sea ahead, where he could see for miles, and the woods along the mainland were thick and uninhabited. He could drag up the boat and cover it with driftwood and keep out of sight when the lobster-men were out, or he could moor the tender inside one of the caves and pull up a pot now and then just before dark. They would not starve, and the chances of their shipping with a tramp steamer would be good. It was half tide, going out. He should have started sooner. Perhaps the fog would lift, or the moonlight would be enough to steer by. He knew all the ledges and sand banks. Only the snags were tricky and the mud on the marsh, and where the river broadened and skirted the town and the factory the channel shifted continually. Bartholomew Bangs had marked it with tufted poles for the sardine pilots. Merrill wished he were rid of Joe.

Stepping carefully on the rotting boards of the landing, he stopped to untie the painter and motioned Joe to get into the skiff. The latter jumped in so awkwardly that he almost upset it.

"That's no way to get into a boat," Merrill said, swinging his leg over the bow and taking up the oars which were lying on the seats.

The tide was running swiftly and Merrill glanced anxiously at the posts still standing in the water.

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"Let's get under way," he said.

With a swift turn of the skiff in the current, he brought it alongside the old yawl into which a motor had been set so that it might be used for hauling clams. He caught the side himself, for Joe sat in the stern not knowing what to do. Merrill hopped to the deck and held the tender steady for Joe to step out.

"Got any matches?" he asked. His own supply was none too ample. Joe found a card of sulphur matches in his pocket and handed them over, while Merrill tilted an old lantern he found in the cabin to see if there was oil in it. He ripped the padlock from the stern locker and rummaging in the dark came across two or three sets of fishing tackle, and a monkey wrench.


"Make the painter fast to the stern," he said to Joe, who tied a clumsy knot around the iron bar and let the skiff drift downstream the length of the rope. The teamster was too nervous to talk and sat uneasily in the stern holding the rope, which was wet and cold. His feet and his fingers were numb. The fog was settling down thicker and at times the moon was almost hidden. In the cabin, Merrill was priming the carburetor. When at last he gave the flywheel a turn, the exhaust kicked back like the shot of a gun, let out an earsplitting

fusillade, and then died. Joe let go the rope and stood up.

"Jesus, what a racket," he said.

"You can't locate where sound is coming from in a fog," Merrill told him. The next time, after missing and backfiring, the engine settled down to an unsteady chug and Merrill raced back to grab the rudder. Under his direction, Joe managed to haul in the anchor and set it dripping on the deck, slapping his trousers afterwards where the chilly water had penetrated to his legs.

"Go into the cabin for a while and get warm," Merrill said, and Joe huddled by the engine, disconcerted by its jerks and clicks. From the stern, Merrill peered into the mist, listening for the echo of the exhaust against the side and thinking always of the falling tide. Not far ahead, he knew, the river turned sharp east and the channel was close beside the bank. But the trees were obscured or sprang up like startled beasts in the fog as he approached, and as well as he knew the country, he could not be sure exactly where he was. The wind was blowing against his face so it was hard to estimate the drift of the current. They had plowed through a patch of eel grass and the propeller turned sluggishly but he did not dare to stop the engine to clear it. So long as they were moving, he felt safer, and through the woods there was no



sign of a light nor a sound except of their own making. The bend to the east was long since due, he thought, but still the banks seemed to run on a tangent. He called Joe from the cabin and asked him to lie on the bow and watch for a boathouse to starboard, but he was not sure he had not passed it. He was sure of nothing except the continued motion of the old yawl through the mist and the weird procession on either side. Soon, if they could keep going, the channel would widen through the marsh, but as it spread it grew more shallow and the danger was increased by mud banks and water weeds.

In order to get down river and across the bay, he would have to pass directly through Steuben. By road it was only two miles, but the way the river twisted through the marsh the distance was easily three or four miles and the channel faced all points of the compass. Joe sighted a blur he thought might be the boathouse and Merrill, straining his eyes, jammed the tiller to his right. At first he thought he felt a scraping on the keel, but the yawl went on and he turned her south again, passing flags and rushes on either side. The motor was skipping, now and then, and the tide ran swiftly. But as they reached the marsh, the wind died and the fog congealed into a damp, impenetrable quilt. Merrill steered by instinct and waited

doggedly for the boat to stop, while Joe was bewildered and alarmed by their changes of direction, and believed they would land back where they had started. All around was the vague gray mist and they seemed to move within a hollow sphere into which the yawl had been fitted and from which there was no escape. The flame of the lantern in the cabin was thinner and more feeble, but there were no other signs of day. Merrill thought the fog would help him, if once he could get out of the river, since it would enable him to land on the island without being seen by the weir tenders or the lobster men. Once he ran the bow straight into the mud, and shoving the tiller into Joe's hands jumped to the cabin to reverse the engine. The propeller was clear and in spinning the other way unreeled the grass which had been clogging it. Merrill tore it loose with the boathook.

"That was a close one," he said.

The speed he got from the clean propeller was rather a handicap, because if he ran aground or slid up on a rock the momentum would be greater. Just beyond his grasp, like the objects in the fog, were fears his mind would have dealt with if he had been able to relax his attention. He wondered what he should do for salt. In the midst of a figure eight the channel was describing, he clasped his

shirt pocket for the deed and remembered he had no money.

A dark, misshapen arm reached out of the water, dead ahead. Merrill missed it with the yawl, but the snag caught the tender and the knot which Joe had tied gave way and let the skiff drift back out of sight.

"For God's sake, I told you to make her fast," Merrill said.

Joe crouched in the cabin.

"What'll we do without a skiff?" Merrill asked. His hope had left him as the tender had slipped from sight and he felt only the gnawing of his stomach, the dampness and a growing hostility to the other man. The islands, without salt or matches or a rowboat, offered no security. As quickly his mood reversed, for he saw a gray shape he recognized to be a blind he had put up for duck shooting. It was several yards away.

"I believe she's lifting," he said. He spoke aloud, expecting no response and listening fearfully all the while to the unsteady coughs of the engine. He wanted most to be alone, to shift for himself. His swinging of the tiller kept the boat winding this way and that, in the general direction of the town. Above the level of the marsh, which in the thinning fog was even more grotesque, a lemon point of light appeared, and at the same instant



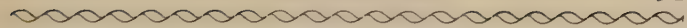
the pale disk of the moon broke through. He grabbed the boat hook, taking ineffectual soundings.

"I believe that's Lucy's window," Merrill said. "We should have started sooner." It was almost daylight when they reached the bridge.

The current swirled and shot them under the old wooden structure, where even the sudden change of pace did not prevent Merrill from dismay at the headroom they had to spare. Before them was the horseshoe bend between the crossroads and the factory and sticking up at odd angles here and there were the tufted poles Bartholomew had left for the guidance of the sardine boats. In the middle was a shifting sand bar with deep water on either side.

Through the half light and the remnants of the fog, Merrill sized up the distance from the wharf and looked ahead for the rocks below the factory landing. They seemed too close, very much too close, and he steered abruptly to the east to clear the sandbar. There was a scraping on the bottom and the bow rose gently in the air, letting the propeller down into the mud. They were aground.

Merrill tried to shove clear with an oar, but the yawl would not move. Once he started the propeller, with noise enough to wake the dead, but it



could make no headway churning in the muck which clouded the water for yards around them. Already the tide had dropped an inch on the side of the boat, which soon began to list. Dazedly, Merrill propped it up with a stake. Two yards on either side was deep water. He could almost reach it with an oar. The noise had frightened Joe, who watched the houses all around for signs of life.

"We'll have to leave her," he said, and took off his boots and trousers to swim.

Sitting miserably in the stern, his elbows on his knees, Merrill watched him.

"Aren't you coming?" the teamster asked.


"No," said Merrill, as Joe tied his clothes around the back of his neck and waded in. The fact was that Merrill, like his father who had twice been washed over the side by one wave and back on deck by the next, had never learned to swim. When the earliest risers of Steuben came to the crossroads later, they saw him crouched aboard the stranded yawl on the glistening bar in midstream.

## *Part Two*

### I

WITH his back to the stove, Bartholomew Bangs stood alone in the small board shack which served as an office in his brother's lumber camp. For miles around the small clearing, where the snow was tramped down hard and the huge woodpile sheltered one end of the messhouse, the trees stood silently, their twigs like frozen nets to catch the snow. The camp, which was forty miles north of Steuben, had recently been built by Clarence Bangs. The help he hired in the factory, except for the men and women of the town, had scattered each winter and seldom had returned, so he had had to break in new employees each year. After having put up the row of cottages at the foot of the factory hill, he had bought a large tract of timber land and now offered continuous work to those who would stay.

The forest was strange to Bartholomew. He missed the restless motion of the sea and the unobstructed view. But he was tired of living in his brother's house, where the housekeeper seemed to



run things and where Bartholomew had to pretend he did not notice what was going on. When the camp was opened up he offered to take charge and decided to build himself a house in Steuben in the spring and to live there alone. He had become accustomed to certain ways, aboard ship, and for years had yelled for what he wanted without having to think of a woman's feelings. Still, he was restless in camp, and spent his days pacing the floor of his shack, feeding wood to the stove and trying to keep out of the way of the men who knew more about cutting and hauling logs than he did. He had more to do in the evening or during the heavy storms than when the work was going on, for if the men were idle there was a continual feud between the ones who belonged in the woods and the factory hands from outside.

Toward nightfall, one day, Bartholomew heard the sound of bells and opened the door as the pung drove by, bringing up at the kitchen with a load of supplies. The teamster tossed him a roll of newspapers from Boston and Bangor. As Bartholomew opened them up, the top one had a picture on the front page which caused him to drop the others and to read hastily. The Plummers were coming up for trial. Beside the picture of Captain Varenus and the reproduction of an old tintype of Merrill taken just after he had left school was another showing a hud-

dled group of Chinese in black smocks and pigtailed guarded by two policemen on a railroad platform, and nearby a pile of potatoes which had been dumped into the sacks around the Orientals.

"I'm afraid Merrill's in for it. It's a Federal offense," said Bartholomew. He was surprised to read that Varenus was suspected of being a member of a famous smuggling ring, the leaders of which had eluded the government detectives for years and were still at large. The story of the night rides by the sea, and the harboring of the Chinese in the old Plummer barn, and the subsequent raids in the Chinatowns of Boston and New York, touching here and there upon facts he recognized, gave an extended importance and gravity to the situation. He had slept so many hours, eaten so heartily and had taken so little exercise that he did not feel like getting into his bunk, so all evening he stood by the stove, rocking on his heels and thinking about Emma. There was no use saying anything more to her, he thought, and still he could not give up the idea that she would be better off with him. Sometimes, because of her obstinacy, he had felt like choking her, as if she were a man, and afterwards it had seemed as if she had been trying to provoke him and would have been triumphant if he had lost his temper. He was determined not to let her get the best of him, but now she was in trouble he

was anxious to comfort her. There were many people in town, he knew, who would secretly be glad if she had to come off her high horse. His uneasiness got a stronger hold on him as the lights of the camp went out, one by one, and he decided to go back with the teamster in the morning.

Steuben, half-submerged in the snow which the sea wind had drifted, blended with the surrounding hillsides where the bleak trees waited like herds of beasts with their back to the storm. Here and there, by the doorways, fresh paths had been shoveled, but the pumps were shrouded, the broad marsh was littered with sheets of stained yellow ice, broken and jammed by the tides. The sardine factory, on its gaunt and crooked piles, was battened down with glittering icicles and the boarded windows stared blankly to the north and east. Claude, trudging clumsily on snowshoes and dragging a sled, was sent from time to time to the outlying houses on unbroken roads to take orders for goods or to collect rent. When money was entrusted to him he carried it in his fur cap, feeling for it frequently to make sure he had not lost it.

Because of the severity of the season and the fact that his small grandchild had been troubled with croup the winter before, Clarence Bangs had taken Lena and Warren to Florida. With the Bangs house empty, the factory closed, the hands all away



in the woods and the Congregational Church with its slim white spire and clover blinds abandoned until the pastor should be sent back in the spring, the settlement on the western hill was practically deserted and the drifts reached halfway to the eaves. What life there was centered around the stores and the post office. Each evening, the residents along the main road leading down the hill watched and listened for the rig which brought the mail but often it did not come, since the trains were stalled for two and three days at a time.

Captain Varenus avoided the square and seldom appeared in the store, where customers lingered to warm themselves in preparation for the journey home. He sat in the kitchen each day, his feet in the oven, until just after supper Lucy carried the soapstones up to warm the bed and brought down his nightshirt so he could undress by the fire.

"It will be all right," she said. "It was all the fault of that Irishman."

"They've all got it in for Merrill," he would reply.


The Federal judge had placed the figure for Merrill's bail so high the captain could not raise it, for the directors of the Bangor bank, who had been carrying his mortgages for thirty-five years, gave notice that they could not be renewed and the bank at the county seat, where Bangs kept his large

accounts, also refused a loan. It was the first time Varenus' credit had been questioned.

The twelve hundred dollars which had been found in his wallet when he was arrested had been marked and confiscated by the government and the horses he had rented Toomey were in the sheriff's care. Lawyer Grey, whom Captain Varenus had retained, knew little about criminal procedure and had never appeared in a Federal court. He urged the captain to get a city lawyer, but Varenus had less confidence than ever in strangers. Rather than let it appear that he was leaving his old client in the lurch, Lawyer Grey did his best to prepare a defense, but the roads were drifted over so badly that communication was difficult. As the day of the trial drew near, Captain Varenus grew more irritable, and jumped whenever any one touched the latch of the storm door. Emma paid little attention to him and ran the store to suit herself, resenting even Lucy's presence there. Business was almost at a standstill, since nobody could do a stroke of work out-of-doors and money was getting scarce. Many of the fishermen who in previous years had come to Varenus for credit hesitated to ask Emma, who was more reluctant to charge goods, and went to Bangs' store across the dike, where they sat all day around the fire and felt free to talk about the smuggling and to read aloud from the papers which

never before had mentioned Steuben. The owner of the yawl, formerly the sawmill proprietor, did not want to press charges against the son of his old neighbor and agreed not to prosecute if Captain Plummer bought the boat and paid for the tender which had drifted out to sea. So the old clam boat lay on its side near the landing opposite the cross-roads, the engine rusting beneath its cover of burlap and the storm-bound gulls standing in rows on its rim in the early morning.

Every one knew Merrill had intended to get away with the boat, and in a community where most of the boats had to be left more or less unguarded, to steal one was a serious matter. The presence of the yawl with its broad bottom turned toward the square kept the case continually in mind. Instead of having the advantage of his means in business deals, Captain Plummer now seemed to get the short end of everything he was forced to undertake. The house in which Miss Dexter lived he had had to let go for a figure much less than it was worth and had learned afterward that the man who had bought it was acting for Bangs. The tall spinster, when she put on her black silk dress and waited for a passing pung to ride to the center of town, went on to the Bangs' store, also, feeling sorry for Lucy as she passed through the square but im-



pelled across the dike by the fear of offending her new landlord, who had not yet raised the rent.

In her corner next to the copper boiler behind the kitchen range, old Mrs. Tizzer sat uneasily, trying to appear inconspicuous and to reassure Captain Varenus. She ate her meals from the back of the stove and got up only to wash dishes or to go upstairs to bed. Lettie was unusually quiet, as she helped with the work around the house and although her appetite was slight, she seemed to be taking on weight and looked healthier than ever. When no one was around, however, she would put her hands to her temples and sit down to rest and she avoided the eyes of Lucy and her mother, for she was sure she was going to have a baby and was again afraid to tell about it.

## II

ON the day before the trial, Lawyer Grey drove up for Varenus and together they went on to the station. Miss Dexter, the postmaster and Vic Perkins had been summoned as witnesses and were to follow in the morning. As they reached the summit of the hill, the snow began to fall from lead-gray clouds in an atmosphere ominously still. They looked back toward the lighthouse, almost obscured, on the line between the sea and sky.

“A nor’easter,” the captain said and started up the horse. Snowflakes sifted down, large and loosely formed at first, then suddenly were whisked into spirals by the first shrill sally of the wind.

“I hope the others don’t get snowed in,” the lawyer said, although they were witnesses for the government. He had no hopes of getting Merrill off and although he did not think for a minute that Varenus had known what was going on, he could not find a way to prove it before strangers. In his contact with the government lawyers and detectives, Lawyer Grey had found them particularly hostile because Toomey had gotten away and with all the searching that had been done in Boston among the Chinese there not a trace had been found of those who had been smuggled in before. A laundryman from the border town, who had had a little shop near the fish store where Merrill had formerly worked, had been arrested and thrown into the same jail, but there was no evidence against him.

As the captain drove away, Lettie, who was in the kitchen alone with her mother, told her about her pregnancy, which she could not hope to hide much longer. On her single visit to the jail, Lettie had said nothing to Merrill about it, although she had intended to before she arrived. The dingy corridors and the bars confused and depressed her and Merrill sat sullenly in the corner, saying little to

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her, and seemed to be annoyed that she had come. Mrs. Tizzer was more upset than Lettie had feared she would be.

"As if there's not trouble enough in this house," her mother said. "I'd like to take a stick to you."

Lettie began to cry. She had not been sleeping well and had been afraid each day that some one would find her out.

"It's not my fault," she said.

"Well, keep your mouth shut until this other thing blows over," Mrs. Tizzer said. And she moved about the kitchen more furtively and grunted to herself in the corner when her daughter passed by. The pig-headed calf had been removed to the attic, but Lettie disliked more and more to remain in the large room alone and on the cold nights shared her mother's bed.

The wind steadied down to a concentrated sweep and through the valley dividing the town the snow hurled itself upon the marshes with a singing sound. From the window, Lucy was unable to see the Bangs' yellow house on the hill and the factory chimney had faded to a dim gray pillar. She went from window to window, to be sure the blinds were fastened and the locks secure. In the sitting room she lighted the lamp and started knitting, but the noises of the storm and the creaking




outside the house drove her to the kitchen. Even the double windows could not keep the wind from sifting in. Snow appeared under the sills and the kerosene flame veered and flickered so she had to turn down the lamp. In the barn, Merrill's old hunting dog began to howl.

The blizzard kept up all night, drifting over the dike so that the low road was completely obliterated, then blown bare on the eastern slope of the hills. No attempt was made to shovel paths nor to break the roads, for the storm showed no signs of letting up. On the second day, the snow ceased blurring the air but the temperature dropped to twenty below and the wind rose even higher, shaping monstrous drifts in the open lots where they lurked at twilight like slumbering animals. From the houses high on the hill, rockets were seen to flare off the coast.

Then the village lay calm the next morning and Lucy, still bewildered from the heavy sleep which had been so long delayed, looked from the window. There was no sign of movement. The lanes and fields were of unbroken white and in their accustomed places stood the naked trees, with branches blown clean. She heard the voices of neighbors with snow shovels and the slapping of buckskin mittens together.

Before noon, Bartholomew Bangs took off his



snowshoes on the platform of the Steuben station, having made the last ten miles from the north on foot. On his way from the lumber camp, the blizzard had caught him just as he hit the open country and he had had to leave the teamster and the rig behind until the road was broken again. The station agent, who had been marooned three days, gave Bartholomew the news of the trial. Merrill had been given five years, with a heavy fine, which was not unexpected, but in addition Captain Varenus had been found guilty as well and had been let off with the minimum sentence of six months.

"You ought to tell Lucy," the station agent said. "I couldn't leave the station."

"Don't that beat all," Bartholomew said. The smoke from an approaching snowplow appeared far down the tracks and from the engineer Bartholomew picked up more details. He wished that he had stayed in the woods.

The government lawyers had assumed Varenus was guilty from the beginning, not believing that such things could go on under his window and in his own stable without his knowledge. They made it appear to the jury that he was rich and shrewd and then asked pointblank if it was likely such a man would be easily hoodwinked. Varenus listened to it all bewilderedly, never having realized that he was in danger of conviction. When he tried to

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speak, he found he was out of turn and on the stand his cross-examiners confused him easily, since he was trying to protect Merrill who had no case at all and made no effort to deny his guilt. The court was severe with Merrill because he refused doggedly to say a word concerning Toomey or the others. It was brought out that the old man owned the horses Toomey had used, and the deed for the blueberry land which Lawyer Grey tried to introduce to explain the money found on the captain made no impression at all.

"The judge is polite," Captain Varenus said, "but he doesn't seem to listen to what I say." His beard was stained and uncombed and the lids of his eyes were rimmed with red. The jurymen were all sorry for him and were glad to see him get the lightest possible sentence. They felt that he had been led into the scheme by others.

On the way across the marsh, which Bartholomew crossed in a straight line on the heavy crust beneath which the windings of the river were hidden, he decided to tell Lucy first, although his idea had been to go directly to the store. The nearer he got to Emma, the less he knew what to say to her.

Lucy collapsed and rocked back and forth, weeping hysterically.

"What shall we do," she sobbed and Mrs. Tizzer tried to quiet her. On his way out Bartholomew

met Lettie in the kitchen and in her confusion she forgot to hide her body with her hands and her wrapper. He could not help but notice her condition.

Almost before he reached his brother's empty house on the factory hill, the result of the trial was spread through the central part of the village, as men stopped shoveling snow to call back and forth to one another. Bartholomew did not tell Emma, preferring not to be connected in her mind with bad news. Scenes of any kind embarrassed him and made him feel uncomfortable for days. He crossed the dike, leaving a trail in the drift which submerged the roadway, stopped at his brother's store to get the keys and built a roaring fire of driftwood to thaw out his clothes. Neither he, nor any of the others could realize that Captain Plummer had actually been sent to jail.

"There's some mistake," he said to himself. But a few days later, Lawyer Grey appeared, dejected and indignant, to do what he could for Lucy and to get some idea as to the state of the captain's affairs.

"I did the best I could, but the lawyers and the jury were a lot of micks. We should have stopped them coming over here," he said and Lucy broke down again and cried on his shoulder. "There, there," he said. "It won't be long."

In the store, Emma worked almost spitefully, keeping Claude on the jump from morning till night. She looked each customer in the eye, waiting for the slightest chance to give him a piece of her mind, but no one attempted to sympathize with her, sensing her mood and knowing her temper.

"It's good enough *for* them," she muttered to herself. "They'll not get a cent out of me." Still nothing was in her name except the bank account in Bangor and she wrote curtly to draw her money out and place it beyond reach. For days Bartholomew tried to make up his mind to see her, but he could think of nothing to say and was afraid his face would show what he felt and would anger her. Still he was worried because she might think it strange if he stayed away. At last he thought of some trifling errand and found her alone in the store, except for Claude who was sweeping out the back room. She bristled as he entered, and in order to say something he blurted out the only words which came to him.

"So you're going to be an aunt," he said.

"What's that?" she asked, and he realized at once she had not known. His confusion in turn conveyed the truth to her in an instant. Emma dropped the package she was holding, spilling tapioca all over the floor. She stood a moment, her hands half raised, the blood creeping up over her

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face to the roots of her hair, then rushed out the door without her rubbers, stamping across the pathway to the kitchen door. As she entered she ran square into old Mrs. Tizzer who was clumsily reaching for the coal hod.

"Get out of here, you old trollop, and don't you ever let me see you set foot in here again," she shouted and shoved the old woman out into a snow-bank, slamming the storm door. "I'll get your duds for you."

Lucy, who had seen Emma hurry up the driveway and who heard her shouting, came in from the sitting-room, her heart pounding. Behind her was Lawyer Grey.

"Why, Emma, the neighbors will hear you," she said.

At the sight of Lucy, whom she had always blamed for mixing them up with the Tizzers, Emma lost all self-control.

"Let them hear. I'll give them something to listen to," she said and grabbing the bean pot from the back of the stove she shattered it on the floor, splashing hot beans from one end of the kitchen to the other. Through the fragrant steam she rushed up the stairs to the room above the kitchen and flung the window open. "Here you are," she said, and one by one she threw petticoats, hassocks, bed-clothes, shoes and even the mantelpiece ornaments




into the deep snow in the back yard. At last, with a crash the old wooden rockingchair went through the window frame and landed upside down on the walk.

Children just out from school hid behind the snow drifts to listen and in front of the store a group of men stood watching. Neighbors came to their windows, excited by Emma's shouting and the noise of crashing furniture and broken glass, while Lucy sobbed and clung to Lawyer Grey downstairs.

Lettie, who had been milking in the barn, heard the noise and cowered in the stall behind the Jersey cow for hours after all was quiet, until Claude went out to look for her.

### III

THE baby was born in June. Reluctantly Doc Haskell got out his old instrument case, the one he was said to have carried up and down the streets of the Connecticut town in which he had intended to practice, and followed the tinker who had been sent by Mrs. Tizzer to fetch him. As he passed the store, and some one called to him from the platform, he blushed and shrunk farther into his oversized black coat, and was glad to be out of sight when he entered the doorway of the shack by the river. A fire was built in the cracked range, al-



though the weather was warm, and after the wash boiler full of water began to bubble the room was so hot that a window was opened on the shore side and the loiterers around the square heard a scream now and then and waited to hear the result. As the birth progressed, with less than the usual trouble, the doctor became increasingly nervous until Mrs. Tizzer lost patience with him for continually telling her to wash her hands and took charge of things herself. Perspiration dripped from the doctor's forehead and as soon as the child began to yell and Lettie seemed in no danger of further convulsions he grabbed his hat and left, his teeth chattering from nervousness.


"What is it, boy or girl?" the postmaster asked as the doctor reached the crossroads. Doctor Haskell stopped short, fumbling his chin, while a yell went up from the crowd on the platform. He had not noticed, in his confusion.

Lucy called to him from her window and hurried down to see what she could do, although now she seldom left the yard except to go to church. Lettie was asleep and before she awoke Claude was sent down with a crib from the Plummer attic, taking a long turn around the hill to avoid Emma's eyes.

In the spring, Lucy had selected her flower seeds as usual from the long rows of illustrated en-

velopes in the store and went about her daily tasks with resignation but after having held out against Emma's stronger will while the Captain was there she now made every effort to avoid discussion and during the day enjoyed being alone in the house once again. Her most frequent caller was Miss Dexter, who had explained Christian Science to her, and although Lucy still attended the Methodist Church and clung to her religion much more fervently, she had grown a trifle stout and began to exude the sort of calm concerning which the tall spinster spoke with thankful tremors in her voice. Behind the barn the sunflower plants had been rattled to life once more by the inshore breeze and crocuses had broken through the ground between the trees, making saffron spots before the snow had melted from beneath the fir trees in the woods. On the porch of what had been Lucy's kitchen the honeysuckle vine sent out new tendrils and encroached upon the clapboards inch by inch. But Lucy had become resigned to middle age and no longer was careful to tuck in the strands of her hair or to change her wrapper after lunch. Claude sometimes helped her with the garden and her afternoon hours were spent in the rockingchair, until it came time to get supper.

On the factory hill, in a lot near the summit which had been a potato field, Bartholomew Bangs



had had the foundation built for his house and when the framework started to go up hammers could be heard across the west branch of the river and fresh loads of lumber were hauled in from Millville. The big bay window Bartholomew had planned would command the lower valley and catch the sun all day and the front yard would be shaded with two horsechestnut trees and a lofty tamarack that was older than the town. The fact that so many of the customers remarked about it so pointedly to Emma made her extra curt with Bartholomew whenever he appeared.

"Hell, she don't know what she wants," he said as he walked back over the dike. His brother's housekeeper, when she had found he was going to leave Clarence's house, had said that if she was the cause she could find plenty of other places herself, and Clarence, who at times regretted he had put himself so much in her power, made no attempt to stop her but she did not leave and now she quarreled so loudly with Clarence that Bartholomew could hear them through the walls and longed for the new house to be ready so that he could get a little sleep.

The whole settlement around the crossroads seemed to have lost its trimness because of the Plummer homestead. Lucy's flowers came up, but she tended them less faithfully and the grass grew

ragged around the dahlia beds and on the border of the sidewalk. Plantain weeds came up in the gravel driveway and the dandelions blossomed in the orchard, from which the last year's leaves had never been raked away. Formerly Victor Perkins had occasionally put in a few days on the Plummer yard, oiling the hinges of the swing, painting the old dory half full of dirt in which nasturtiums were planted and cutting the grass with a sickle. But Emma had set herself against all unnecessary expenditures, so Victor, with his sack slung over his shoulder, crossed the dike to work on Bartholomew's house and ate his lunch beneath the tamarack which was to shade the roof.

Since neither Mrs. Tizzer nor Lettie was able to work for a while, Clarence Bangs let them have their groceries on credit, and some of the older inhabitants, who had held aloof from the new element brought to town by Bangs, relaxed a little and began to think of Clarence's enterprises as the mainstay of the village. He became more active in the church and the Grange and was made a director of the county bank upon the death of one of the retired sea captains.

As soon as Lettie felt strong again, she took her old place in the packing room, and when work was stopped for a few minutes by the cry "Hot fish" she would hurry across the bridge to nurse

the baby. They had named him John. When she could overcome her lassitude, Lucy did what she could to help Mrs. Tizzer, giving her money she had intended to save for the taxes on the old Maxwell lot. The untidiness of the shack and the baby's clothes dismayed her, and she was afraid he would be sick when the hot weather came, but Lettie, happy to be with the factory girls again, kept her health and was able to nourish the child and during the cool nights the baby slept quite soundly. So little by little the Steuben folk got used to the changes which had taken place and went on with their seasonal round.

It was toward the middle of August that Captain Varenus came back, his shoulders slightly stooped and his skin still yellow from a lifetime of tan. As he got off the train, the surprised station agent tried to greet him as though nothing had happened and no one asked him questions. Claude drove him across the marsh and by force of habit the captain helped unhitch the horse and stood, with his gloves in hand, in front of the empty stall.

"Come in and get cooled off," Lucy said, gently. "You must be hot after the trip in the train." He followed her to the sitting-room and sat down in the rocker, ignoring the fact that the house was deserted and the driveway grown up with weeds.



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"You've forgotten your grandson," Lucy reminded him, after he had rested a while. They went together to the Tizzer shack where Lettie shook hands with him shyly and the old woman greeted him with her usual deferential tone.

"Come right in, Captain Plummer," she said, and Lettie pinched the baby's cheek. John opened his eyes and tried to focus them upon the stranger, then turned aside as a squadron of sand peep flashed by in drill formation, showing silver on the underside of their wings.

"He looks all right enough," said Varenus, fumbling with his beard as he stood there, shaking his head. His figure again became familiar, as he walked through the tall grass in the yard or down the shore road, but he no longer occupied himself with business deals nor chatted with the customers on the platform of the store. Having little to do, he spent more and more of his time in front of the Tizzer shanty and would whittle out boats, rigging them with fishline, and would paint the hulls sometimes from an old can of white lead still left on the bench in the stable. He would place the baby near the bank of the river, with the old woman to watch, and cross the bridge with the sailboat under his arm. Then he would set the rudder and turn it out toward the center of the stream, calculating the drift of the tide and the wind and as he re-

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turned the tiny craft would describe a perfect arc and run its bowsprit into the mud, at the point where the child was waiting.

Emma, from the doorway of the store, would pay no attention to them. Her one outburst seemed to have drained her long accumulation of violence and to have left her slightly weary, too. Her figure was firm and her carriage erect, but there was no longer the same zest to her movements as she worked behind the counter. Trade was so dull that she could not replenish the stock and what money she had saved was hidden in her clothes closet. Hour after hour, she was left alone, until she could not bear the odor of coffee and molasses nor the buzzing of the flies on the sticky flypaper. At meal times, little was said and the enormous dining table kept them all far apart. The complacency and resignation Lucy showed made Emma want to scream and tear the napkins but she felt no further impulse to assert herself.

One Sunday Lawyer Grey appeared for dinner, and after the meal was over Varenus and his guest went to the sitting-room to talk things over. When they called in Emma and suggested that the store must be sold she offered no objection, knowing it had been running behind, but she left the house and walked back over the hill. There had been times when she was on the verge of going to Bar-

tholomew, and she knew he wanted her and was the only man she ever could stand, but she could not make the gesture of surrender, and tears came to her eyes because of the barriers she encountered in her own nature and everywhere outside.

Bartholomew was installed in the new house across the valley, and its white walls caught the lavender shadow of the giant tamarack. He kept house for himself, to show he didn't need a woman around, and although the sink and the stove were littered with dishes, the kitchen table covered with fishhooks, papers of pins, tins of salt and pepper, sweet grass baskets and carpet tacks, and the two beds upstairs were slept in alternately before one was made, he made it plain to Clarence that he got along very well indeed and was beholden to nobody.

Accustomed for years to the work in the store, Emma could not remain in the house by the cross-roads in which she had been born, and bought a house near the old Maxwell place where she kept more and more to herself. Often in the evenings, Captain Bartholomew would place a lighted lamp in his own window to make the neighbors think he was staying at home, and would go by the back way to Emma's place where they would sit in darkness, but she would never marry him and after a while he accepted the situation as it was. They contradicted and abused one another and swore now and

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then they were through, but as years went on, their companionship became a daily and more intimate affair and they took no further trouble to hide it.

## IV

ALONG the shore road from Millville, Victor Perkins rode on the wagon seat with one of Clarence Bangs' teamsters, hauling a straight cedar pole. He got out at the crossroads and, putting the tree on his shoulder, lugged it to where the old yawl lay on its side.

"Much obliged," he said, and started stripping off the bark.

From the doorway of her shanty, where she was making Johnnycake on the cracked stove, Mrs. Tizzer yelled to him.

"What are you up to, Victor?"

The tinker had found so much to do around the factory and the settlement near it that he had stuck pretty close to carpenter work for the past season or two and had fallen into what was for him an irksome routine and had saved a lot of money. Lena Bangs and Warren spoke so enthusiastically about the Florida winter that Perkins had decided to try it himself. With another workman he had bought the yawl and was going to make the trip along the coast and through the lagoons. Victor

had no faith whatsoever in the engine, but the other man declared he could make it run, so the tinker had cut himself a cedar mast and bought an old set of sails at Millville.

"Do you reckon she'll float?" asked Mrs. Tizzer.

"I've sailed worse tubs than this, and not in sight of land, either," Perkins replied. He stopped his work to go with her to the shack for a piece of Johnnycake and while they were talking there Lettie came home from the factory.

"I made five dollars to-day," she said, and went in to look at the baby. Claude, who had crossed the dike not far behind her, saw Victor working there and sat down in the grass near them, his overalls and jumper soiled with fish scales and grease.

Victor pulled out a roll of charts from the cabin of the yawl and began to study them, the old woman looking over his shoulder. He traced with his finger the course down the river and along the coast to the tip of Cape Ann, then across to Provincetown.

"That's the only place we'll strike a heavy sea, in Buzzards Bay," he said. "If a man can get out of this pesky river he ought to be able to sail to Shanghai."

"I wish I was going with you," said Mrs. Tizzer. Her happiest memories were of the winters

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when she had cooked aboard a coal scow on the New York waterfront.

"Lettie was born there," she said, and touched the mouth of the Hudson River. Claude got up to look.

"We'll make it, if it takes a month," said the tinker. He was following with his eyes the soundings and rocks and currents engraved so neatly on the charts and was fitting the rolls together in order, from the Canadian border all the way to Panama.

The whistle of the factory blew five short blasts and they all stood up to see the sardine boat come around the bend.

"Here comes Bartholomew," the tinker said. "There'll be fish to-morrow."

For a long time they sat on the doorsteps, nodding or exchanging fragmentary remarks when the lobstermen came in one after another and hove to, or when an Old Hahn, the great blue heron, winged its way laboriously up river. They were thinking of different things and confirming one another's presence with desultory conversation. Lettie had forgotten her husband, almost, and her sleepless nights in the great square bedroom, even her recollections of the fright and confusion before little John was born. She wondered vaguely how the baby could repeat the sounds he heard and why he



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watched the birds so quietly and she wished, sometimes, as the flood tide crept nearer the sill of their door that they lived in some safer place, where he could not get into mischief if her mother dozed.

While her mother was hearing the boom of a tug and the wash along the sides of the scow when she started out of the harbor in the dead of night, and then the steady swell of the sea, lifting, always lifting, and sleep becoming mingled with the motion. Men calling to one another from the wharves and back again, the slap of a wet rope as it hit the deck and the quick turn around the post, grimy cards dealt out in the light of a boat's lantern. She was hanging clothes along a line from her cabin to the bow, or giving her hand to a drunken man as he clambered on deck from the ladder.

And the tinker drifted into silent contemplation of the world as it appeared to him, with the great white areas on the charts and maps as continents of water upon the very edge of which, in any climate or hemisphere, strange people had settled to welcome the seafaring man, had lighted lamps in the windows of their villages and hung the fish to dry in the sun and kicked the seaweed from their rubber boots or slipped upon jellyfish. It was the ocean upon which man lived, with ports on either end of a voyage, guided by the shiver of a compass needle. He thought of stark skeletons

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of cities, black against the stars, but always he looked up at the underside of roofs and billboards and warehouses until the chimneypots floated like spars in a moving sky and the moon came up behind. He said a part of this, but the others were not listening, and the cool air of evening stole over the surfaces swelled by the tide.

He had been south once before in the winter and had come back part way on the train, but when he had reached a station he knew, he had gotten out and walked the whole length of Maine, along the shore, following the coves and promontories and borrowing the lasts of village cobblers to tap a new sole on his boot. He had seen much of the world, the incongruity of its aspects and the recurrence of its phenomena. He had found shelter where lanterns twinkled and always something to mend. And in Steuben, around the stoves, he had talked with men who had stopped in more ports than he had. The ocean didn't change. Its queer beasts were slippery and cold and nobody knew what grew in the tropical seas nor the number of birds that hunched in great circles on the Arctic beaches, nor the soul of the lumbering whales, like moving hotels with pairs of eyes. If only the sails could be hoisted once more and silently do their work.


"I begin to feel chilly," said Mrs. Tizzer and Lettie handed her a shawl as she told about a man

who had gotten his family out on the roof at Cherryville and had kept them in their nightshirts until morning, waiting for the end of the world.

It was dark, and Varenus, who had been down river tending his eel pots which he had taken over when Johnny Grey died, started for home. The front rooms of the Plummer homestead were closed and the blinds in disrepair. The store had been painted bright red by the syndicate. Although Lucy urged him to take it easy, Varenus kept busy digging clams or picking berries which Claude was sent out to sell. His failing memory caused him to repeat again and again his stories of the sea, wavering when the interest of his hearers lagged but unable to stop before the end. He trudged across the flats in hip rubber boots, wearing an old cap and a broadcloth vest. And often he stood for hours upon the shore, staring across the marshes and hunched together like the huge marsh heron which blinks in the twilight and flies with the maximum of effort. The man who was washing off the factory landing with a hose saw him dimly and said:

"Is that Varenus or an Old Hahn out yonder?"

The captain crossed in front of the factory, his boots crunching the broken clam shells, and climbed up on the roadway across the dike, but half way over the new truck, which was used to take the packers back and forth from the nearby towns,



came clambering down the narrow road without lights and in trying to get out of the way, Varenus slid down the other side into the waste ditch from which the dirt to build the road had been taken. The slopes were steep and slimy and an inch or two of stagnant water stood in the bottom. The old man, in his clumsy boots and with a basket of clams in one hand, tried to get back to the road but each time he slid down again and finally lost his balance, sitting flat in the water. His efforts made his breath short and his anger caused him to waste his strength. He heard footsteps on the road and decided to ask the passersby to give him a hand but the wind brought him the voice of Clarence Bangs and Varenus stood in the dark, his feet sinking further into the mud, and let them pass within ten feet of him without making a sound. Then he resumed his efforts, cursing and gasping, leaving tracks for a hundred yards on the side of the ditch. At last he got to the top and, after resting a while, started once more for home, his trousers dripping.

The group in front of the Tizzer shack had been silent for quite a while and as Lettie came back to the doorway after listening to the baby's breathing, a fish jumped in midstream, leaving widening rings on the still surface as the tide was about to turn.

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"Say, Victor, do fish sleep?" asked Claude suddenly.

The tinker, interrupting his meditations, stood up and stretched.

"That beats all. I never thought of that," he said, quite taken aback. "I never thought of that."

Varenius, carrying his clam basket, reached the circle of light around the lamppost at the cross-roads.

"There's a man who ought to know," the tinker said, and he raised his voice.

"Varenius! Do fish sleep?"

Captain Plummer stopped and took off his cap, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Well, now, Victor," he said in a puzzled tone, "I'm hanged if I know."

# LAVA ROCK



TO

*Charles H. Paul*

## *Lava Rock*

### I

THE off-horse shied to the edge of the waste bank, nearly losing his footing as the scraper ahead was dumped. With a lazy crack of the lines, the skinner brought him back to place while gravel trickled down the canyon side, dislodging pebbles on the way. A quarter of a mile below, the river drew an angry line, with patches of snow still clinging to the banks and sandbars.

"A hell of a horse they give a man to drive," said the skinner to his brother, who emptied the slips as they crawled in turn around the circle. The metal bottom scraped on the dirt as the slip was righted. So they continued, round and round, on the summit of the divide, while the frost of early morning disappeared and the sun gained headway in the remnants of the bleak winter sky.

"He was never hitched but once before you got him," the brother said.

Jake Thompson, the foreman, got up from an empty powder keg and with a pick handle marked the line between the cut stakes on the sidehill. He


wore a leather vest, unbuttoned, and chewed snuff. Walking back a few yards over the roadway they had dug that morning, Thompson looked out over the Boise Valley, spread in a huge triangle with its apex at the mouth of the canyon above which the gang was working. Here and there, disclosing arcs of its erratic course, the river was visible. Through more fertile areas, clumps of cottonwoods bordered it. Hills nearby were covered with brush, waist-high, and sparse grass grew between. In the distance, vegetation blurred into a neutral brown, stirred only by the movements of cattle or the shadows of clouds.

On the road from Barberton, six miles away, two figures were moving side by side. Thompson noticed them and walked along to the timekeeper's shack, a hundred yards back, to order more horses. Joselyn, the timekeeper, handed him a requisition to sign.

"There's two more coming," said Thompson.

"I'll tell the cook," Joselyn said.

The gash on the high hillside deepened as the slips went around. Thompson left the timekeeper's shack and watched them a while, then strolled up the canyon to a dugout where the powder was stored. He cut off a length of fuse with his jack-knife, pried open a case of dynamite and took out



two sticks. Fifty feet ahead of the bend on which the slips were working a granite boulder bulged through the thin covering of earth. Two men with a hand drill, taking turns holding and striking, started a hole. Thompson clamped the cap on the end of the fuse with his teeth. A driller walked back to warn the men driving the slips, but the foreman after he had lighted the fuse stood within a few feet of the blast as the fragments scattered in the opposite direction. On the wastebank, the unbroken horse reared, tangling the traces, while the skinner banged him on the head with a club and swore.

"Here comes a couple of Bohunks," said the slipholder.

As the triangle clanged for meal-time the skinners trooped behind their teams to the corral, unhitching the bridles and rushing to the trough. In the cookshack, where the others were already eating, two rangy dark-eyed Austrians sat at the end of the table. The skinner reached in front of them for the pudding, then shouted down the line for meat and potatoes. As his elbow touched the sleeve of one of the foreigners, he grunted and spread his arms. The Austrians ate on without a word, got up and sat in front of the timekeeper's shack waiting for the foreman. In the cookshack the men were grumbling.

“Let one of ’em drive your team,” said the skinner’s brother.

“A good idea,” the skinner said as he threw his leg over the bench.

“How about giving me a decent team. I’ve worn out the lines on that ornery roan,” he said later to Jake.

“Take the grays hitched to the stoneboat,” the foreman said. To the tallest Austrian he indicated the other team and awkwardly the latter put the bit into the horse’s mouth, the roan pulling back every time the man came near his head.

The sun came out stronger in the afternoon, and the last of the snow, melting on the sheltered slopes, started small rivulets which ran down into the cut, muddying the whole excavation. The dirt came up easier and the waste bank extended nearer the edge of the canyon. The slip-holder spoke to Thompson about it.

“You ought to dump this dirt back farther,” he said. “She won’t stand.”

“Who’s running this job?” Thompson said. But he walked to the edge and looked over, watching the loose dirt sift down and carry with it now and then small landslides which streaked the snow on the sandbar below with reddish heaps. He hated soft dirt, having hired out as a rock man.

But he turned away, uncertainly, and busied

himself with other things. Not long afterward he motioned the other Austrian to take a sledge and follow him to drill another hole in the ledge ahead. As the Austrian swung the heavy hammer, the foreman flinched and got ready to let go, but the first blow landed squarely so Thompson settled down to turning the drill and chewing his snuff. The Austrian had worked on rock before.

The other Austrian, holding the lines behind the slip, watched the preparations for the blast and tried to say something to his brother. He pulled up on the edge of the waste bank when the signal to fire was given. The fuse spluttered and the roan stood on his hindlegs. As the explosion scattered the rocks, the two horses and the slip, with the Austrian caught in the harness, slid down the slope, slowly at first, then gathering momentum. Dirt and rocks went with them, careening ahead, following thunderously behind. Two dead horses, feet up, the body of the man and the scraper were piled on the sandbar, five hundred yards below. The brother stood stupefied on the brink, threw out both arms and started to jump. Thompson grabbed him and held him.

"No use. You can't get down," he said.

There was no way to reach the bottom of the canyon, even by going back six or eight miles on the road. Thompson stood fumbling his whiskers.



One by one, without the word being given, the skimmers drove to the corral and unhitched, sat around camp a while and then started the six-mile walk to Barberton, which consisted of one ranch and a roadhouse with a hot spring. Joselyn tried to talk to the remaining Austrian, but the latter knew no English. He sat on his bunk, looking at the wall, and after dark lay down on his bed with his heavy boots on, and did not move all night, although Joselyn sensed that he was awake. The timekeeper was wakeful, too, wondering how the Austrians had found out about the job and had made their way through plains and cities and along hundreds of miles of railroad to the brink of the deserted canyon. He tried to think of some way to get the dead man and horses out of sight. At last he went to sleep.

In the morning, only a handful of men showed up for work, still staggering with liquor. Whenever one of them came around the circle, the sandbar swung into view a moment. Before noon they had quit again, and having spent all their money, demanded their time before they started for the roadhouse. Some went on to Boise, eight miles farther. Thompson avoided Joselyn's eyes, walking back and forth between the excavation and the stable, sitting on his bunk, pacing the floor of the shack.

"I may as well go to town," he said at last. "I'll try to round up some men." He set out, walk-

ing rapidly down the long hill toward Boise, knowing he was going to get drunk. Joselyn and the cook ate with the Austrian, who tried to make something clear to them, with long silences between. Once Joselyn thought he understood a word.

"The poor bugger wants a priest," he said to the cook.

"Fat chance," the cook replied, shaking his head.

In two days the job started moving again. Thompson came back, played out, and brought one or two of the natives with him. Ten more Austrians, led by one who could speak a little English, came with a note from the forwarding man by the railroad. In front of the timekeeper's shack, they talked excitedly with the man whose brother had been killed and walked to the edge of the waste bank, looking down and taking off their caps. Five of them were given teams to drive, and the others worked on drills. Thompson put them in a separate tent. Before the week was out, the high bend at the canyon's mouth was left behind and the roadway extended down the long incline, veered to the right, then mounted gradually. In the coulee were the ruins of an old placer mine.

As the weather improved, the gang grew larger. Thompson did the blasting and bossed the drillers and a man with one deformed hand, hard

blue eyes and a tight mouth took charge of the slips. His name was Joe Butler and he had brought his wife to Boise, hearing it was a four-year job. Thompson, who was camp boss, strolled over to the excavation one day and told him to keep his skinners off the stakes.


"What can a man do with a lot of Bohunk bastards?"

"They're damn good men," said Thompson. The two foremen stood looking each other in the eye, elbows tense, jaw muscles tightened, each waiting for the other to make a move.

"You watch them stakes," repeated Thompson, as they both looked down at the same second.

The canyon deepened as they worked farther up-stream. On the opposite side the slope rose sheer, broken into horizontal strata with broad veins of purple lava rock, on levels ninety feet apart. Piles of broken lava stood at perilous angles by the river and ledges of disintegrated granite, pale brown, or rose and gray, showed through the low clusters of shrubs and sparse areas of grasses. For miles on either side were hills, bare in the foreground, wooded where the creek beds were, and forests in the distance. Everywhere lay the huge relics of prehistoric upheavals, of time uncoiling relentlessly, and nature's perfunctory healing in the fading of colors.

For there in its remoteness the land had



achieved an ancient dignity, like the sea. Terraced and lifted by successive plains and table-lands, the foothills shared the earth's great curvature, its odor of dust and antiquity. And still, at the end of April, when the river was raging, the barren slopes burst out with white fragrant syringa blossoms, streaked with the slate-green of the foliage.

A half century before, a few prospectors had sifted the sands for gold and some of them had tried to live in the canyon, but the timbers had rotted and the men had gone away or died. Gophers and hedgehogs lurked in the chinks of lava or sunned themselves upon the shelves.

The road gang had reached Ten-Mile Creek, which was pouring yellow mud into the Boise, when George Otis, the engineer-in-charge, drove out to camp. With him was a huge red-faced Scotchman with humorous gray eyes and a rumbling voice. James McGowan was an old-time contractor on ditch work and had met Otis on a big job in Montana where they had had a long and stubborn encounter of their opposed interests. McGowan had gone broke, largely because he had not counted upon such strict inspection.

In the rig with them was an elderly professor who wore a black felt hat and carried an umbrella. They passed the Barberton roadhouse and mounted the longest hill to the mouth of the canyon. The

immense valley lay behind them, hundreds of square miles of land which, in some way, they were to make fertile. They rounded the bend on which, from the seat of the buggy they could look down to the river, five hundred yards below, but the road there had already been worn with rims, all signs of fresh dirt had disappeared and where the old prospectors had crawled with pack horses the newcomers drove on a roadbed ten feet wide, its slopes standing uniformly at one and one-half to one. At Ten-Mile Creek they overtook the road gang and stopped to talk with Thompson before going to the timekeeper's shack to wash. The foremen grinned as the professor stepped out of the rig with his umbrella, but the old man neither saw them nor heard them. He was stone deaf and all morning his eyes had been fixed upon the canyonside the April sun had kept alight for him. When he had spoken of two million years, the Scotchman's eyes had twinkled and Otis' face had shown a trace of strange enthusiasm which occasionally crossed it as he stood over a set of blueprints, or scanned the figures which represented the weird balance of Herculean forces. The flunky banged the triangle and the men rushed into the mess tent. The visitors sat with the foremen and the timekeeper. Otis had known Butler on a canal job in Utah. Thompson ate with his knife and after trying once to roar

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into the professor's ear, gave up attempts at conversation.

"What's the judge doing way out here?" he asked, later.

The road stopped abruptly on the hill beyond Ten-Mile Creek and so Otis, McGowan and the professor took saddlehorses and left the road gang out of sight around the bend. The trail mounted, ledges slanting treacherously toward the river. On the summits were crags like misshapen statues. Always Professor Crosby, shielded ludicrously from the sun with his umbrella, peered across to the lava flows. Sometimes he dismounted from the broad and complaisant work-horse they had found for him to ride and cracked a rock with his pocket hammer or scratched a pebble with the diamond in his ring.

They crossed a smaller creek, where the river broadened and the cliffs across were parted to make room for a meadow. Beyond was a tangent where the lava streaks were matched on each side. Scraggly pine trees clung to granite cliffs. But each rise was not quite balanced by the descent, and with each mile they reached a level from which they could look far back and downward.

The sense of solitude grew as the hills shut them in and the vegetation changed in character. Miles ahead the river forked and spread into smaller tributaries among the Sawtooth mountains. Hawks



wheeled above them and northward, toward the vast forest reserve, a smoke-gray moving area disclosed the presence of sheep in tens of thousands. McGowan was uneasy. He could not get his mind off the gang at work on the road, the slips and shovels stacked by the Boise warehouse, the carloads of dynamite and vertical boilers and derrick masts which must be dragged so many miles before he could use them.

"The farther we go, the longer haul we'll have," he reminded Otis frequently.

Late in the afternoon, after four miles afoot, they approached a horseshoe bend where a good-sized creek came in just below. Otis looked anxiously at the geologist.

"That's the place," he said and his open hand described an arc from hill to hill across the river, as if he were touching a tangible shape. The superintendent nodded noncommittally, then looked at the water which tore through the canyon with uprooted trees and occasional bodies of animals in its yellow torrent.

North of the river and east of the creek, at their intersection, was a hill one thousand feet high and shaped like a pyramid, with slopes so steep that a man could climb them only by holding occasionally to the sage brush or syringa bushes. The creek was well-wooded and led back northward to the

forest reserve. The river swung around between the hills in a bulged semi-circle with stark lava-streaked cliffs on the south side. The top formed an oval table, six hundred feet above the channel and covered with grass. From there the surveying party waved and started to pull up. Otis signaled them to stay where they were.

A wire cable had been stretched across the river and a flat bottom boat was fastened to it, at such an angle that the current would propel it across. Hitching their horses at an outdoor corral near the surveyor's tent at the mouth of the creek, Otis, McGowan and the professor crossed to the other side of the river and climbed the face of the granite and lava cliff. The old man clambered from shelf to shelf, never stopping for breath, his lean knees and elbows finding chinks to hold him everywhere.

The hills all around and the cloudless sky, formed a vast stadium, with the odd group of men in the center of its arena, gesticulating and pointing. But the arena was as old as the earth and its tiers had never before been occupied. Otis explained his plan, while McGowan listened and the professor followed his finger on the map. They were to build a tunnel through the flat-topped hill on which they were standing, divert the river, then block up the canyon with a dam of concrete and boulders.

In the evenings that followed they sat around the surveyors' tent, discussing plans and prospects, Otis alert and eager, McGowan impatient to get to work and bewildered by the technical terms. The professor slept in the only bunk and the others took their bedrolls out among the trees up the creek and saw the stars between the branches as they sunk to sleep.

One morning as they struggled up a hill, McGowan, holding to the sage brush to keep from slipping back, heard the sharp sibilant hiss of a rattlesnake come directly from beneath him. He bellowed and jumped clear, while Otis, pale and sick, grabbed the professor's coat to stop him. The Scotchman, his face deep red and sweat pouring from his forehead, sat dazedly a moment, then with Otis and the professor leaning over him, he slowly unbuckled his belt and looked for marks.

"He must have hit the belt," he said, for there was not a scratch.

All three men were suddenly weary. The sun beat down upon the sandy soil with concentrated hostility. The hills were grim and menacing. Otis killed the snake with a club. His temper led him to strike it harder and longer than was necessary and then he stopped, a trifle ashamed. The canyon, shimmering in the heat waves, seemed at that instant to belong more to the reptiles than to him.

But they went on about their work, deciphering the stakes, estimating the yardages to be scraped or blasted away, and selecting locations for the towers of the cableways which were to span the valley.

Dirt piles patched the slopes and long boxes were filled with labeled dirt from the borings. As long as the daylight lasted, the geologist squinted at the samples of sand and clay, rubbed it in his fingers, and recorded the levels at which hard rock was struck.

Already there were three tents at the mouth of the creek and six horses in the corral. One Saturday evening, early in May, Jake Thompson came walking up the trail and said his road-gang was only five miles behind. Their next camp might as well be on the damsite, he thought, so they could work back.


In two weeks the slips were circling on the last hill which led down to the creek.

## II

THE camp below the damsite began to spread raggedly over the hillsides. Each morning after the whistle had blown, Joselyn started on his rounds with his timebook. An office had been set up in a tent upon the hill which formed the western wall

of the arena. For three months, since the road gang had completed the long road up the canyon, the sun had beat upon the slopes insistently, turning the springtime green to drab, and glistening upon the quartz and mica in the sand. The Boise had diminished to a puny creek in which the ferry dangled for five or six yards.

On the face of the granite and lava cliff on the downstream arc of the bend the mouth of a tunnel pointed squarely at the office tent, so that noon and evening, and many times between, the force of the blasts from across the river shook the tent flap and jarred things from the shelves. Thompson, now in charge of the tunnel gang, worked a hundred feet in from the surface of the hill, where banjo torches flared all twenty-four hours and the stutter of steam drills never stopped except at blasting time. Another crew had started from the upstream end. As Joselyn approached, Thompson came out into daylight a moment, and scribbled with a piece of blue chalk on the cover of a dynamite case in order to remember who was working and who was not. Powdermonkeys passed them with freshly sharpened drills on their shoulders or dull ones to be tempered. Below the blacksmith shop, the cinders from the forges mingled with the lava piles at the brink of the river and the



spray of sparks made red volcanoes in miniature while the night shift worked.

After he had counted the rock men in the tunnel, the timekeeper recrossed the river to the pile driver which alternately whirred and thudded, driving huge timbers in a dovetailed row out into the bed of the stream, for the cofferdam. Only a narrow channel was left on the south side for what remained of the water. Five hundred feet up on the face of the pyramid-shaped spillway hill, Joe Butler's gang of slips were scraping off a level platform for the cableway, and fresnos, with four horses abreast, tiptoed down the slope, dragging huge loads of earth behind them. On this side of the river, there was little hard granite, or the ledges were deeply buried, and here the sun shone most viciously, wilting the horses long before noon and keeping the waterboy trudging constantly up and down the path. It was the month the rattlesnakes were blind and deaf, lying sluggishly in the dust or the brush and silent until they were stepped upon. But most of them had already left the huge bend in the canyon, crawling farther into the hills and calcined piles of rock.


At the foot of the hill, just west of the creek, carpenters were building a warehouse and a few yards nearer the river, a huge messhall and kitchen. Already in the center of the camp, some of the



tents had been replaced by new buildings of fresh, unpainted lumber, with roofs of tarpaper studded with nails. The gang of Austrians had doubled in number, and a dozen Bulgarians who had been in a section gang on the Short Line had appeared one day and McGowan had hired them. Among the riggers and the drillers were several Spaniards. Half the carpenters were Swedes. At the mouth of the creek and along the horseshoe bend, one hundred men and thirty horses worked among the excavations and snorting machines. A half mile in any direction, and the bare hills stood in monotonous ranks as they always had stood, in perpetual silence and sweltering beneath the sun.

Having checked up the men around camp, Joselyn started up the shady creek, where a road had already been broken to the reservoir and the mill and farther on into the forest which spread for hundreds of miles on the north side of the divide. McGowan spent most of his mornings at the mill, turning out lumber for the buildings and heavy timbers for the bridge and cofferdam. The logs shrieked and whined as the revolving saw cut through them and the fragrant pile of sawdust mounted and was carted away. A clearing of trees which had been chopped down to feed the boiler widened daily.

On his way down the creekbed, in the early



afternoon, Joselyn saw a woman standing in the doorway of the tent which Joe Butler had set up between the damsite and the reservoir, shaded by a clump of trees. Edna Butler had come up on the stage from Boise that noon. The road led near the doorway, and she stood there as he passed. The timekeeper mumbled an uncertain greeting and she dropped her eyes. She was a fair-haired, clear-skinned woman under thirty, with dark blue eyes, and wore a white apron like a nurse. Each day as he passed, Joselyn spoke to her a little more audibly, and finally stopped for a drink of water. She seemed over-nervous, as he stood in the doorway, glancing over his shoulder toward the damsite, but she waited there each day when it was time for him to come.

Over the road which led up the canyon from the Boise plains, a stagecoach drove each morning and returned each afternoon, with sacks of mail and occasional passengers. Workmen, native or foreign, always walked the thirty miles whichever way they were going. As the driver rounded the sharp turn on the hill which formed the portal of the canyon, going dangerously near the edge when he was drunk, he would point with his whip to the sandbar a quarter-mile below, as it swung into sight, and tell what had happened there. In the stage with Mrs. Butler a man and woman had rid-

den into camp, the man rather small with soft hands and an obsequious voice, the woman more than six feet tall and both muscular and handsome. But she, too, spoke softly and with a trace of Irish brogue. After the noon meal, the man went to the office and asked to see the boss. He was a barber and wanted to set up a tent. There were no tents to spare, but Otis, when he saw the woman waiting, reluctantly told the warehouseman to sell one. It was set up on the other side of the river, near where the bridge would finally reach the south bank.

When McGowan came down from the saw-mill, he saw the new tent across the river and asked Otis about it. The engineer told him about the barber.

"We need carpenters worse than barbers," the superintendent said. He thought it was useless to pamper the men, and was uneasy because women were coming into camp.

The sawmill ran three shifts, and every available team was used for hauling lumber down the creek, but the lack of it was retarding the work. Otis had planned a cottage on an easy slope east of the office and across the road, facing the river at a point one hundred yards from the bridge. At last, during August, after two or three letters from his fiancée in which she had made it plain that she did

not quite understand why he could not go ahead with their home when he was in charge of the entire project, he took a small crew of carpenters off the bunkhouses and started them on his own house. McGowan, after as much objection as he could make without being rude, consented to have a similar cottage built on the same slope.

When Otis' cottage was nearly done, he had a bed and a few articles of furniture sent up from Boise on one of the rigs that hauled machinery and supplies and a Swedish carpenter named Johnson, who had been a cabinet maker, worked in his off hours on whatever else was needed. In the middle of September, Otis left the damsite long enough to drive to town, meeting the train from the East on which Emily Townsend arrived. They were married that evening and the next day drove up the canyon to the camp. Mrs. McGowan, a gaunt, gray Canadian woman who looked ten years older than her husband and spoke with a trace of the vernacular, welcomed the bride and tried to make her feel at home.

Emily was in her late twenties, with brown eyes and a sensitive, oval face, but a trifle awkward in her movements. She came of an old Pennsylvania family whose social position was high but whose fortune had gradually dwindled. Otis had met her on a trip to Washington for consultation work and

they had kept up a correspondence which had resulted in their engagement. The character of Otis' work and his responsibilities toward his family had kept him from thinking of marriage before but the sudden growth of his reputation and increase in his means had coincided with his meeting with her. Most of her relatives and friends had believed she would never marry.

She was timid as they drove up the canyon, being unaccustomed to horses and frightened by the narrow road and the steep descents. When the brake groaned as they swung around a turn, or they were forced to the very edge of the bank in passing a freighter, she clutched Otis' sleeve and pushed hard against the bottom of the rig with both feet. Otis pointed out the old placer mines in the ravines, told her how the river had torn through the channel in the spring and spoke of the magnitude of the work and the unique engineering features involved. She asked about the other women. So far there were Mrs. McGowan, Mrs. Butler and the barber's wife.

"The barber," she said, half involuntarily. She was anxious to do what was expected of her, but a trifle puzzled. At dinner, James McGowan was dressed in a dark suit with a light, soft-colored shirt and spoke with direct wit and fine Scotch courtesy. Mrs. McGowan was less graceful, and self-conscious

about her grammar. Just after dark, they all walked through the camp and over the works which were blazing with kerosene torches and lanterns nailed to posts and timbers. All around the lighted area, the dark rim of hills cut off the damsite as if it were a huge steamship adrift on a black sea, and the sky was heavy with autumn stars. In the tunnel, which was damp under foot and jagged on the top and sides, the battery of steam drills tore away at the face of the ledge. An Austrian with beady eyes and wide mustaches turned to change a drill, spitting at their feet before he saw them, then doffing his cap. Behind them, waiting for them to step aside, a man carried a shallow wooden box on his shoulder.

"That's dynamite," Otis explained, and Emily could not conceal the real terror on her face. They went out to where the slips were working, and just to their right the pile driver's drum clattered, there was a moment of silence, then a heavy thud. As they passed along the cofferdam, men clad in their undershirts and overalls toiled below them. Emily could not help but feel their hostility as they caught sight of her light dress in the lantern light. She hurried, believing she heard snarls behind her.

"I'm a bit tired and nervous from the ride," she said, and they went back to the cottage.

In daylight, however, she wandered on the



hillside away from the works and found strange flowers which she picked and arranged for the table. The flowers were not like the ones she had known so she wrote her bachelor brother asking him if he would send her a good book on botany. The flowers brightened the little dining room, finished with matched boards, and made her feel more at ease.

### III

THE harvest was early that year and the railroads started hauling grain. At the time when men came up the road in droves to look for work, supplies and heavy machinery were hardest to have transported. The white men filled four large bunkhouses, across the road from the office, and three on the lower level, by the warehouse housed the Bohunks. In all the crew amounted to three hundred men and would be doubled the next spring.

"It's time to cut down the wage scale," McGowan remarked one day. "There's no sense in our paying \$2.50 a day when we can get all the men we want for \$2.25."

So orders were given the forwarding agent in Boise to hire men on the lower basis and all the foremen were told to pass on the news in camp. In the messhall and in all the bunkhouses the men sat in groups and complained that night and the

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days following, and three fights broke out with the foreigners. Mrs. McGowan went to the Otis cottage one afternoon and spoke of the trouble to Emily, who avoided the parts of the camp in which the men were quartered and asked her husband anxiously if he were sure he had done right.

"It's the law of supply and demand," he said.

The forwarding agent in Boise reported that an I.W.W. leader was hanging around the railroad yards and telling the men to boycott the dam. One day, as the McGowans were eating at noon, the timekeeper came over to tell the superintendent that a man who had arrived by stage was urging the men in the messhall to strike and that they were cheering him. The big Scotchman jumped up from the table and hurried down the hill. As he entered the messhall door, he saw the man standing at the head of a long table. He made for him, overturning a bench, grabbed the man by the collar and threw him face downward through the doorway and into the dirt. Men rose up in confusion, tin dishes clattered to the floor and when one of the laborers near him growled, McGowan grabbed a pick handle and swung. Arms, bodies and boots swirled around the doorway and a steady roar arose. Nearby a group of Bulgarians were playing horse-shoes. One of the natives rushed in their direction, followed by others. Joe Butler, the slip foreman,

scrambled down the bank from the road. Men were tangled all over the yard, in a free-for-all, yelling in six different languages, then sharply a gun went off. As quickly as the fight had started, it stopped, some ducking for cover, others standing panting where they were in the hot noon sun. But near the doorway of the Bulgarian's bunkhouse a foreigner lay crumpled on the dirt and Joe Butler stood over him, smoking gun still in his one good hand.

McGowan grabbed the gun and threw it all the way to the river, kneeling beside the man who was down.

"You've killed him," he said at last, and with tears in his eyes and his shirt torn half off, he went into the bunkhouse where the dead man's countrymen were huddled and got a blanket to cover the corpse. He met Otis half way up the hill.

"He drew a knife on me," Butler said, and went quickly into the warehouse. Shrilly the whistle blew, and after looking bewilderedly at one another, groups of men drifted back to work. Thompson came down the creek from his shack and went looking for his rock men.

"Come on, boys," he said. "I'll break the bastard's head that touches one of you." The Austrian leader translated awkwardly. Automatically the ponderous machines began thumping and tearing away at the hill. The scrapers circled and slid

and the hammers of the carpenters snapped erratically against the fresh-cut boards. Butler was sent down the valley to work with the gang setting poles for the transmission line, to get him out of sight until the trouble blew over. The only relative of the dead man, a cousin, was sent to work around the Boise warehouse. The corpse was buried in a coulee below the damsite. The fact that justice was remote and could not conveniently be resorted to was not so strange to the foreigners, who were accustomed to settling their own rows.

Each morning from the door of his cottage Otis looked anxiously at the weather, for the drought had persisted far into the autumn and the boards and the grasses were dry. He dropped into the warehouse after each freighter arrived to ask about the supplies for completing the waterworks. As he stood on the porch, ready to leave the cottage one day at noon, Otis saw a familiar figure coming along the pathway.

"Well, for God's sake, Nick," he said, and shook hands.

Before him stood an old man with a bullet head, steel gray eyes and massive, hunched shoulders, an Indian fighter who had been his guide on his first trip through the Yellowstone valley and had worked for him afterwards on the canal. Emily stood in the doorway.


“This is my wife, Nick,” he said, and the old man bowed and said, “How d’y’ do.” The news of the four-year job up the Boise valley had spread by means of harvest hands and railroad brakemen into all the vast surrounding states. Nick had heard Otis was the boss and had walked across country from Montana.

“How’s chances for a job?” he said.

They were not taking on any men, but Nick was hired to sweep out the bunkhouses and do odd jobs around the cottages of the head foremen and engineers. Often in the afternoons, he would stand by the back door, cap in hand, and talk with Emily, who felt much more comfortable when the gruff old man was in the neighborhood. She depended upon him for many things, and when she brought back flowers for the table, much scarcer in the autumn season, he would tell her the common names of them, picturesquely mispronounced. Often she would see him stand on the crest of a hill, after supper, motionless as long as the light lasted, and as he worked he talked spasmodically to himself, in a tone of voice no gentler than that he used for others. The sight of a foreigner would make him growl like an animal.

“They’ve got hair all over, like a damned monkey,” he said.

In the middle of the night all the whistles



began to shriek. Flunkies on the graveyard shift banged the triangles. A light flickered on the roof of the warehouse, flames burst through from inside and the boards crackled as the wind from up the canyon carried the fire swiftly along the ridge-pole. In the bunkhouses, sleeping men stirred lazily, then sat up, then started to dress. Men came running up from the hole, down from the creek, always in the hideous racket of the whistles and gongs. Leaving Emily almost in a faint, Otis ran down the hill, overtaking the superintendent. Both men were limp from disappointment.

"Try to save the cookhouse," McGowan said.

Otis could feel the heat from the burning warehouse in which was stored, among kegs of nails, washers, pulleys and ropes, the cases of technical books he had accumulated for many years. The warehouse was gone.

"Start a bucket line from the river," Otis shouted. Cooks, Bohunks, riggers, carpenters and skimmers lined up, while the German cook tossed out everything in his kitchen that would hold water. It was futile, for the corner of the messhall had already caught from the heat. A veer of the wind started the line of bunkhouses across from the office. Old Nick ran to the Otis cottage and started piling Emily's things far up on the hillside.



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She clung to him, until he told her to sit still upon the pile of her goods.

All work in the hole had stopped, and the banjo torches were paled to points of lemon light in the glare of the fire. Heat drove men in squadrons forward and back, and buckets were abandoned. In the kitchen and the ruins of the warehouse cans of beans and drums of kerosene mingled their great and small explosions. Men rolled kegs of lubricating oil toward the excavation, as the wind continued to blow down the canyon. McGowan's cottage caught, then the others. The office was in flames, and the engineers ran to safety with arms full of tracings and blueprints.

Otis, McGowan and the old Indian fighter sat on the bare hillside, out of the heat, and watched. The wind died down. All the buildings were burning that could burn. The heavy machines and the cofferdams were safe. The stable boss had driven the horses up the creek, where they snorted and trembled around the dry reservoir. As they passed the Butler shack, Mrs. Butler clutched Joselyn's arm, trembling in her nightgown.

"For God's sake, don't let them see you. He'll kill me," she said. The timekeeper mingled with the men and horses, then hurried back to camp.

The sky was orange with the reflection of the flames and the sheer sides of the canyon, black in

shadow and ghostly in the dancing glare, changed colors, gradually, fading for a while, then re-awakening as a fresh blaze sprang up. On the hillside, Otis and the superintendent were already making plans. They decided to rush up all the tents to be found in the country, hire more carpenters and buy lumber wherever they could. They would close down the graveyard shift and use the men for rebuilding the camp. There was still a chance of being ready for the high water in the spring.

Nick started putting up a tent for Emily. The fear and excitement of the night, and the wild orgy of the crowds and flames, had called upon the strongest reserve of her character. She had resolved, through all the hours, to stand by her husband. To his suggestion that she stay at the hotel in Boise, she replied that she would prefer to stay in camp, if she could help him, and this first spontaneous sharing of his work brought them closer together. She combed her hair in front of the cracked mirror tacked to the tentpole and cooked the breakfast, and smiled as she looked out upon charred oblongs flat upon the ground which marked the sites of the buildings. On the river banks, the Bohunks washed out the one shirt they had left and waited for the whistle to blow. By ten o'clock the outlet of the tunnel roared like a cannon and the blast echoed for miles downstream. After an

interval the drills began to stutter. Within a week the smell of charred débris had left the camp, and uprights and two-by-fours made fresh timber skeletons where the warehouse and bunkhouses had stood.

The forwarding agent at Boise, who was having more trouble than ever with the labor leaders, said he was sure the fire was the work of the I.W.W.'s. His remark, varied and amplified, spread through the town and the mayor deputized all the men he could get his hands on to run the Wobblies out of town. One hundred tramps and laborers were rounded up, locked into freight cars and taken toward Salt Lake where they were turned loose in the middle of the prairie. Two of them were killed.

Before the office had been rebuilt, or the roofs covered for the bunkhouses, it began to rain, a drizzle at first, then settled down to a steady pour. The river turned yellow again, and the excavation was inches deep in mud. The next day the outside men had to lay off. Emily hunched in the center of her tent, avoiding the drops which seeped through wherever she touched it. The light strained feebly through the canvas, and the kerosene stove smelled and caused her to cough. She caught cold, but would not hear of going to town. The German cook prepared special meals for them and for the

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McGowans, and she looked forward all morning and again all afternoon to going to the messtent where the ranges kept the place really warm and thoroughly dry. Her nose was a trifle red and her brown eyes watery. Continually she was forced to use her handkerchief. The barber across the river had built a shack which had escaped the fire, and often his wife thought of asking Mrs. Otis if she would care to share it, but she hesitated to do so for fear of appearing forward.

The weather got too bad for stringing wire, so the gang was called in from the transmission line. Joe Butler was brought back to camp and given charge of the work below the cofferdam, filling in behind the piles. Day and night it rained, and the wind blew fitfully. Emily could hardly help from getting up to hold the tent flap still, and when she did the clothes on Mrs. McGowan's line continued fluttering and snapping. Nick came in frequently to feed the stove. He had found a rusty Sibley somewhere and had set it up in a box of sand. All day he kept it red hot for her, cursing the country with every stick he shoved in the door. At night the water trickled under the floor, dripped upon their tarpaulin which protected the bed. There was insufficient light to read and nothing else to do. Otis was often obliged to leave her alone in the evening, for details of the dam design were

being worked out and the question of the type of masonry to use was becoming more intricate.

Rade Priza, the cousin of the Bulgarian who had been shot, had nothing further to do around the Boise warehouse, so without saying anything to the forwarding agent, he started on foot for the dam, in a different style cap and corduroy coat, and happened in on a day when they were short a few men. The mud and rain made the white men more and more reluctant to get out of their bunks in the morning and McGowan, whose patience was not improved by the weather, sent dozens of them down the road. Priza, now Nick Straboff, was placed in Butler's gang on the night shift. Butler prodded him continually, keeping him where the mud was deepest and shouting at him every time he straightened his back.

On a Saturday, Edna Butler took the stage to town, to do some errands. The next morning, one of the carpenters who lived near them up the creek came running into the warehouse.

"Joe Butler's all cut to pieces," he said. The warehouseman and a few others rushed back with him. The slip foreman was entangled in his blankets, with most of his clothes on, soaked in blood. His cheek was cut open from one ear into his mouth, his hands were cut from grabbing the knife. When they tried to get him on a stretcher, most of his

intestines bulged out through a slit along his abdomen. In his right groin was a stab wound four inches deep. But he was still alive.

They loaded him on a stretcher as best they could, and tried to keep him covered, but the road was uneven, and as they turned the corner by the office, Emily, who had stayed as long as she could stand it in the tent and was on her way to ask George to let her sit in the office with him, met the stretcher bearers and saw what they were carrying. She screamed and fell flat into the mud. This time the barber's wife picked her up and carried her to the nearest building. As soon as Emily was able, she was taken to the barber's shack, where Otis found her and got her to agree to go back East for the winter.

#### IV

EARLY in winter the firm which had contracted to furnish two cableways to span the canyon above the excavation sent Bert Eldridge to the damsite to set up the towers, the hoists and to anchor the cables. He lived in the bunkhouse across from the store and several flights above it. Each evening he joined the card game there, with a fresh fund of news from Chicago and Minneapolis. In another corner Ned Sanger, an old circus musician with one eye, and Hjalmar Swenson, a young Mormon



from Idaho Falls, blew for an hour or two upon their instruments. Sanger had led the Sells-Floto band which had gone broke in Omaha and played the clarinet with astonishing mechanical precision, in spite of his false teeth and the cud of tobacco he kept in his cheek. Whatever was set in front of him, he could play, and could turn the music up-side-down and read it backwards. Swenson played the trumpet.

The evening Eldridge arrived, after the musicians had finished practicing, he took a bottle of Old Crow from his grip and offered them a drink. Sanger accepted with an elaborate toast, in an oratorical manner which seemed strangely to fit him. He became genial at once, eyeing the bottle and taking a second drink with even more alacrity. After the lamp had been blown out and all the men were in their bunks, Swenson heard his partner dressing.

"Where are you going?" the Mormon asked.

"Just out to the can," the circus man replied, but in the mud and rain he walked all the way to Boise that night, hitting the first saloon about daylight.

The poker game began each evening after mess. Old Nick, the crumb-boss, lighted the kerosene lamps, growling if he stumbled over a boot left out in the aisle. The steam of soggy blankets

and sweaty clothes hung upon the air until the tobacco smoke overcame all milder odors. The card players kept on until midnight, by agreement, lowering their voices and letting the chips fall on a blanket after the other men had crawled into their bunks. The table was beside the bunk of Johnson, the Swede carpenter boss, whose tapping at the other end of the room mingled erratically before bed time with scales and arpeggios and the clicking of chips. Johnson spent his evenings making furniture for the men who had brought their families or were planning to do so and sent all his money back to his wife and six children in Minnesota. He had a head shaped like a pig, with a wide, good-natured smile. After his evening's work he snored within four feet of the card game, disturbing the poker players much more than they disturbed him. On pay night, the barber happened in to collect a few odds and ends due him and sat in the game. After that he became one of the regulars, playing a conservative, reasonable game and winning steadily although in small amounts.

Soon after Eldridge arrived, he wrote a letter to a rigger who had helped him on several other jobs and was then just finishing up in Buffalo. Three weeks later Warner Nichol arrived. He was quick on his feet, with shoulders far too broad for his waist and slender legs, and his arms reached

halfway down to his knees, dangling, enormous hands. He could twist himself around a pulley, suspended in midair, until he looked like a spider crouched in a nest. Every man in camp whom he could induce to put on the gloves he brought to the bunkhouse and often, if the bout was hot, the card players stopped to watch it. At the end, the lone Mormon would play a flourish on his trumpet and the men from the double tier of bunks would shout.

"Shut up, you bloody scissorbills," Old Nick would yell from his blankets. He had to be the first man up, to light the fires.

The cableway crew was working high up on the north hill in spite of the bad weather, for the tunnel was soon to be completed and the excavation to start as early as possible in the spring. A platform of earth had been leveled on the slope, even with the top of the oval hill across the river, and a half-erected tower already overlooked the entire works. Eldridge in his working clothes, which he changed before eating every night, mounted the hill as the whistle blew, Nichol ahead of him. Among his carpenter helpers was Howard McGowan, son of the superintendent, who had finished his course in chemistry at a technical school and had come to make his parents a visit. Howard was a tall, lanky boy, slightly lame, with a high forehead and a voice like his father's, but when he tried

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to speak, sometimes, an impediment kept him gasping a moment before he could get under way. All day he clung to the high timbers with cotton gloves, swinging his hammer and trying to keep warm. In the evenings he often came to the bunk-house on the hill to hear the Mormon play. Finally one of the Bulgarians on the lower level got a portable organ which he played with one finger, holding a sort of drone by fastening down one bass key with a match. Howard got acquainted with him and borrowed his organ occasionally, to play with Swenson.

The crew had been cut down to about two hundred, only the steadiest of the laborers remaining through the winter. The weather made out-of-door work expensive and ineffectual. Still a few freighters were kept going, hauling in supplies for the spring, and a road gang was kept busy repairing the damage done by the rain. All up and down the canyon the slopes were drenched and the ledges glistened. Once in a while a few inches of snow would fall, turn to sleet, then melt to rain.

There was no change of weather in the tunnel, however, and there the work was concentrated. Torches flickered as the wind down the canyon caused suction at the outlet or blew straight in from the upstream side. The two gangs had been working toward one another steadily and the dia-

grams showed there were fifty feet to go. The granite ledge, between strata of lava, which showed on the face of the cliff, held solidly through the hill and displayed its angular lines and facets on the jagged arch and dripping sides. The smell of stale powder smoke hung there always and often one of the men would have to lay off a half day with a powder headache. The drills attacked first the top of the arch, leaving a platform which was blasted from above to form the flat bottom over which the river was to flow. The floor and sides were lined with concrete. Only one man had been hurt there, and he was knocked over by a side-swipe from McGowan when the big superintendent had caught him tamping dynamite with a crow-bar. After that, Thompson made the men be more careful. Like most rock men, the foreman believed it would get him in the end, but would get him proper.

The rock foreman had built a shack in the settlement up the creek and had brought his wife and their two children to live in camp. Mrs. Thompson was brown from weather and greasy cooking, and although misshapen, was strong enough to hold her own in case they got to quarreling on a Saturday night. One of the boys worked as waterboy, and nagged his father continually to get him a job carrying drills to the blacksmith



shop. One day just after the drills started, Thompson thought they sounded peculiarly, but at first decided it was on account of the depth of the tunnel. After the mid-morning blast he saw that the top of the arch was darker than granite could ever be. It was lava. He sent word to Otis who hurried down from the office. They had struck the layer of lava rock which dipped in the core of the oval hill, as Professor Crosby had said. The leader of the Austrians looked dubiously at the fragments lying at his feet, which his men were beginning to clear away. He went into a hasty conference with the drillers, speaking in Austrian. Six years before he had been caught four days in a tunnel which had caved behind him. Indecisively they went on with their work, but Otis, who could now see what before he had been forced to take on faith, scarcely left the tunnel a moment, and the Austrian boss, deducing that if the engineer was not afraid no one else should be, kept his men in line by pointing out Otis' example. Within twenty-four hours they had gotten used to it and forgotten the lava, except that they had to turn the drills more often to keep them from jamming.

When the diagram indicated that the tunnel gangs were within twenty feet of joining, the crew which had started from the upstream end was taken off and set to dumping rock around the upper



cofferdam which soon was to be put to test. That day Ned Sanger rode in on the stage, dressed in a store suit, but without his clarinet. Eldridge, who had felt guilty about starting him on a jag, got the instrument out of hock for him and Sanger led the Mormon and the superintendent's son in the evening concerts. One of the blacksmiths sent to Chicago for a double-B bass.

Nichol, the rigger, had boxed with every one in camp who would take him on, and was beginning to be bored with it when the barber's wife, who was left alone evenings, passed the bunkhouse door one night and waved to her husband in the card game. The rigger was boxing with a slow and heavy Swede. Mrs. McKinnon, at the invitation of Howard McGowan, who had risen by habit from the organ seat, stepped in, and the men stretched out on the upper bunks became quiet. It was the first time a woman had ever entered there. But Mrs. McKinnon did not mind the crowd of men. She was watching the motions of the boxers who had speeded up instinctively. She looked questioningly at her husband, who nodded good-naturedly. He was winning.

"You ought to try a round with Mary," he said to Nichol who had stopped as the timekeeper banged an ash pan for a gong. "Her brother is Luther McCarthy."

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"Do you mind?" she asked.

The rigger blushed and the men began to laugh, but Mrs. McKinnon borrowed a jersey and put it on over her waist, after laying her heavy coat across a nearby bunk.

"I'm used to it," she said. "I've four brothers in the ring."


The musicians stood grouped in one corner, the card players sat on the lower bunks, and all down the long room, from the upper level, the faces of men framed in tousled hair and distorted by the kerosene flame and shadows of the bunk posts, peered out. The woman moved like a cat, but half a head taller than the rigger who did not know at all how to behave. At first, he would not try to hit her and she refrained from hitting him, because she did not want to shame him. She merely longed for her favorite exercise.

"Come on," she said. "You can't put a glove on me."

Nichol led off, not hard but quickly. Everywhere he found gloves as big as pillows. And once when he left himself open, she got him full on the jaw and the whole bunkhouse roared. She was strong, perfectly unruffled and had a big advantage in reach. The men relaxed, howling at the top of their lungs when she landed.

Otis, who had left the office where he usually

spent his evenings, was taking a walk around camp to rest his eyes. Many times he had felt the impulse to go in and hear the music, or even to augment it with the bones he had played in the college minstrels, but he was hesitant to enter, knowing the cards would have to be hidden perfunctorily and that if there was a bottle in sight, some one would have to cover it up, while he carefully looked another way. The noise in the bunkhouse on the hill above the store attracted him and he walked up and down on the road nearby, catching glimpses of movements through the windows but uncertain as to what was going on. Each two minutes, the ash pan was thumped and the men began to cheer. When he was within a few feet of the door, some one opened it to let out the smoke and give the boxers air. They saw him, so he could not back away. He entered, standing with the musicians and trying to appear inconspicuous. The timekeeper sounded the gong and Mrs. McKinnon stepped from her corner where he had not seen her. Nichol sprang from the other direction and they went at it. This was to be the last round, so they cut loose. The men forgot the engineer and yelled advice from the bunks. It was a first-class exhibition, for the barber's wife took the offensive and the rigger could exert himself as much as he pleased in defending himself.



Otis watched tensely the calm concentration of her handsome Irish face, the rhythmic play of her shoulders and elbows, the skill of her footwork, hampered as she was with a skirt. For a moment, in the weird, smoky light, encircled by dim and grotesque faces, the barber's tall wife seemed to concentrate all force and beauty. She backed the rigger slowly toward the corner in which the engineer stood, feet shuffling on the sanded floor, gloves slapping incessantly and always with a feline grace and a terrible control. The ash pan boomed and the bout was over.

"It's beautiful," said Howard McGowan to Otis. Ned Sanger stepped gallantly into the ring and held up Mrs. McKinnon's glove. Then, grabbing his clarinet, he started on dextrous variations of a Wobbly song, which Howard and the Mormon caught in the second measure, and twenty men roared.

"Oh, why don't you work like other men do?"

"How the hell can we work when there's no work to do?"

Otis went out, unnoticed, and walked far down the road before he realized where he was going. His blood had overcome the chill and dampness of the air, and he was thinking of the opera house in Washington, on the trip when he had met his wife. Schumann-Heink had sung the rôle of

Brunhilda, in deep, vigorous tones, verging now on the guttural, again on a piercing soprano. His concepts of women and strength merged for an instant like the eclipse of heavenly bodies. He recalled dimly the warlike heroines of mythology, all confused. That night he slept soundly, and woke up refreshed.

But before he got into bed, he saw himself before the mirror, six feet tall, his muscles soft but quite intact.

"My God, I'm getting fat," he said.

Waste dirt from the road by the office had been extended by cutting back into the hill and a small hospital had been built there. No big disaster had arrived and as the day for the doctor to come drew nearer, Otis and McGowan were increasingly afraid something would happen. But he showed up on the stage one day, two weeks late, and quickly got things ready. Only three men had been buried in the coulee below camp, the Bulgarian, Joe Butler and a Hertzegovinian giant who had had an epileptic fit.

Dr. Hewlett was tall and blond, with gray-blue eyes and a perpetual smile around his mouth. Men trooped to his office with colds, or splinters in their fingers, and he treated them with perfunctory care. He was interested most in surgery. When Mrs. Thompson dislocated her shoulder, he gave her gas

and snapped it back in place as quickly as Jake could have put a new handle in an adze. The doctor hit up a quick friendship with Bert Eldridge, although he did not play cards and drank very little. Old Nick was given him for an assistant, and the Indian Fighter growled as he swabbed blood from the floor or held a pan for an ether patient.

Two other bunkhouses had been put up during the winter, and just downstream on the north side from the excavation a huge warehouse to hold cement had been built. As soon as the rain stopped, freighters began hauling in sacks of cement, then the weather turned cold again and a foot of snow fell. Old Nick was so contemptuous of the size of the storm that he would hardly take the trouble to clear away the paths around the hospital. He slept in a cot there, whenever there was a spare one, and read a seed catalogue laboriously by the light of the doctor's calcium burner. The mess house had been enlarged to hold six hundred men at a sitting and Edna Butler was employed there with Mrs. Meyer, wife of the German head cook. She wore the same white aprons and served the head table where Eldridge, Warner Nichol and the foreman ate together. Nichol had saved quite a roll of money and was restless to get to Boise for a day or two, but since the tunnel work had let down, the pivot of the job had shifted to the cableways and he was



the best rigger there. He worked overtime and Sundays, but with every meal he found it harder to keep his eyes off of Edna. Since Joe had been killed, Joselyn had been bashful about approaching her. Days went by after the burial and he had not been able to say a word. When finally they met on the road, he walked along a way with her but neither of them had been able to make a start. All the timekeeper's native caution seemed to keep him from her and her husband's violent death had stirred her conscience to the point that she felt ashamed of what previously she had done quite naturally. The sun came out one Sunday afternoon and Nichol, off-shift for a few hours, shaved by the bunkhouse window, put on his good suit which he kept beneath his bunk, and went to the kitchen to ask Edna to take a walk. She consented, although the roads were muddy and it was difficult to keep warm. The gang on the cable-way tower waved to them across the gully.

As they returned down the creek toward the canyon, Nichol pointed to a group of men standing on the upper cofferdam. The gates were being dropped and the river trickled through the concrete channel beneath the southern hill and emerged for the first time through the outlet below where the dam was to be. That night it snowed again.



## V

IN the clear spring sunshine, the slips circled hour after hour where formerly the river had swung around the horseshoe bend. Behind the upper cofferdam, the back-water rose steadily and the stream, dyed yellow and tearing through the canyon at a rate which increased as the tributary creeks poured in, swirled floating logs and bodies of sheep, now and then, through the tunnel. The outlet gushed and roared, tumbling end over end the huge boulders which had been dumped there, so that frequently they had to be replaced by others from the spillway hill.

Sharp shadows of sage and syringa bushes moved like sundials on the sandy slopes, but the gophers had fled from the chinks of lava rock and the clatter of machines drove the hawks which wheeled above the chicken houses up the creek high into the air. The snow was melting in the Sawtooth mountains and the surveyors were far up the valley, camped in their tent again, sounding the stream, measuring the current and recording the water levels day by day. Frequently Otis left the work on the damsite to spend the day with them, and each morning he scanned the figures anxiously and read the gage on either end of the tunnel. The snow had been light, and the thaw

unsteady, so there was no chance that the tunnel would prove inadequate that year, but the following spring, when the hole would extend a hundred feet down to bed rock, filled with machines which had been lugged part by part over thirty miles of road, if the flood should overtop or undermine the cofferdam a solid year's work and millions of dollars would be lost.

The cottage had been rebuilt and everything put in order as it had been before the fire. Nick spent all his spare time spading up flower beds, fertilizing them with leaf mold, and planting the seeds he had bought by mail from Montgomery Ward. Men passing on the road asked him if he were digging postholes, and he growled in response. By the time Emily returned, the early flowers had pushed through the earth and the hillsides the whole length of the valley were dappled with syringa buds. She had spent the winter with her brother, writing faithfully every day, and as she had encountered her friends, one by one, and told them of her adventure, the canyon dancing in flames, resplendent with syringas, or desolate in the relentless drizzle of December, had gained in poignancy, so that when she rounded familiar bends, her husband driving, she forgot to be afraid and pointed to the wrecks of placer mines and the gorgeous disorder of volcanic relics with an eagerness she had never felt

before. In the East, by an open fire and surrounded with congenial friends, phrases her husband had uttered returned to her, so that at length she understood many of the problems involved in the construction of the dam, and told with pride how the river had been turned from its course to flow through a hill of solid granite.

The mail, which had been forwarded from the Boise office, became so voluminous that a post-office was established in camp and was called by the name of Lava Rock, Idaho. All available space had been settled up the creek and across the bridge where first the barber had located. Bunkhouses in ranks, and on three levels, covered the slopes below the works on the north side, and pile drivers, steam shovels, stiff-leg derricks, drills and centrifugal pumps thumped, roared, wheeled and gurgled twenty-four hours each day. Not long after the river had been diverted, Bert Eldridge had gotten the upstream cableway set up, and early in May its mate downstream sagged gently from hill to hill, across the canyon. In order to get the machines going at the maximum efficiency, Eldridge remained to run the upstream hoist on the day shift. Nichol took the other. From morning until quitting time they raced, setting a pace which the night men and the graveyard shift could never equal. The carriage slid out over the excavation, dropped

its huge, dangling bucket into the gravel of the river bed, dragged it a yard or two until it was filled, and then snaked it aloft again to dump the load upon the southern hill. The concrete which was to fill the hole they were making would consist of these same materials, screened, and remixed with cement and water, but first the hole must go down one hundred feet to bed rock, the humped backbone of the continent. Every night twenty or thirty dollars changed hands in the bunkhouse above the store, in the pool on the number of loads Eldridge and Nichol would lift out each day. The rigger saw Edna every evening, and the boxing bouts were dropped for the time. She had sold her shack to a carpenter from Nebraska named Walkenhausen, who had built a porch on front and another room behind and had shingled the roof.

Men drifted up the canyon continually, in groups or all alone, Swedes, Cockneys, Bohunks, Hoboes, some were plain muckers and skinnners, others with a trade. McGowan hired every one in sight, to clean up after the cableways, drive the fresnos down the spillway hill, stack cement in the warehouse, turn out rough lumber for forms. The transmission line from Barberton raced over the hills and dipped into the gullies, with three copper wires flashing in the sun and bottle-green insulators on twenty-foot poles at regular intervals. Some-

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times the chicken hawks would sit for hours on a wire, and when a large one spread his wings to fly there would be a wisp of smoke and fireworks in the distant transformer station. The trouble man would start out, cursing. The cableways and the larger machines were run by electric power and the wavering banjo torches were replaced by huge arm lamps which gleamed like constellations, pink and orange, in the deep ravine at night. And each night, sometimes long after the shift had had the midnight meal, the big Scotch superintendent roamed from hill to hill, watching the slips go round, stopping a moment at the cableway platforms where the engineers tugged at the levers, reversed the drums, and jerked out load after load of gravel from the hole unseen below. Bells rang for signals and at four-hour intervals the steam shovel snorted, wheeled, then let its shrill whistle cause the damsite to vibrate and to pause while the sound raced up and down the canyon. In the rows of bunkhouses a few men stirred and turned over, others slept soundly through it all.

Often, too, Otis was seen on the works at night, peering over the cofferdam to watch the water rise, climbing the spillway path to look down at the cluster of lights below, which formed patterns as strange as Orion and the Pleiades. His wife, when she accompanied him, could not repress her



old terror at the violence which seemed to threaten from all sides, the workmen toiling in their shirts, the ungainly derrick booms and buckets rooting like prehistoric animals. One night as they stood together on the platform, Otis suddenly turned white and started down the ladder, yelling:

"For Christ's sake get out from under that cableway!"

A group of muckers stood aside quickly as a dribbling of rocks struck the ground from the cableway bucket six hundred feet above them. She had never seen his face like that, nor heard such a tone in his voice, and after they had returned to the cottage, she lay awake, almost sick at her stomach. She had found him looking a trifle drawn and tired on her return from the East and while he was invariably solicitous and courteous with her, she was a trifle chilled by evidences of his suppressed irritability. He worried too much about the job, she thought. He needed recreation.

Except for a few men, and one or two of the women whose destiny seemed to follow emotional paths, the dwellers in the bunkhouses and the shacks along the hillsides followed a routine which was marked by the whistles and the triangle on the mess house. They struggled out of their blankets, ate a meal without turning right or left, then worked four hours. They trailed from the hole to the mess

house again, loafed until the whistle blew, then shoveled, hammered or drilled until the shift was over. The harnesses clanked, the stable boss put up the teams, the hard rock foreman set off the blasts, and the men trooped back to sit on the edge of their bunks, take off their boots and trousers, and sleep like logs. The more active of the white men gradually converged to the bunkhouse above the store, and of the four buildings on the cindered flat between the warehouse and the river, the one in which the Bulgarians lived was often alight until eleven, with strains of Balkan song and the whine of the organ, or the thudding sounds of a wrestling match escaping from the chinks around the door and windows. They were a sturdy lot, not so tall as the Austrian rock men, nor as graceful as the Spanish riggers, but good workers and invariably cheerful. Before the river had reached its peak flood, another Bulgarian came up the long road to the office and gave his name to Joselyn as Michel Raditch. As the timekeeper scribbled his name in the book and told him where to go for a bunk, he thought he recognized the man and in watching his back descend the hill at once it became clear to Joselyn that Michel Raditch was Nick Stroboff and also Rade Priza. At the same time, the timekeeper's face flushed with the memory of a black eye Edna

Butler had carried for a day or two, months back, so he decided to keep quiet.

During the winter, the timekeeper had fallen into a routine scarcely more varied than that of the laborers, except that at the end of the month he had to work half the night in order to get the time book totaled and the pay roll ready. With the men on the job, and especially the foreigners, he had the reputation for being square, so that when he made a mistake, instead of changing the books, he adjusted it on the next pay day by adding in a few hours extra time. Thus he had gained a reputation for accuracy with the superintendent. After supper he sometimes tried to read, but there were few books in camp and the newspapers came two weeks old. He had no one to write to except his mother and nothing particularly to say to her. So his hair thinned a bit around the temples, his slow voice grew more deliberate and his gait as he made his rounds over the job relapsed into a methodical stride. At meal times, Doctor Hewlett tried to stir him up and now and then elicited a dry response. 'At first, as Joselyn realized the camp life was getting him, he went to town over Sunday once a month, but he did not drink much, had no friends there, and sat for hours in the lobby of the Idanha Hotel, waiting for some one to drop in from the dam. As he sat there, one Sunday afternoon, James

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McGowan and his wife came through the doorway, the superintendent looking dully at the floor and Mrs. McGowan speaking reassuringly to him. They sat beside Joselyn, but the conversation dragged and finally they excused themselves and went up to their room. It was the first time the superintendent had left the job since it had started.

Several weeks before, Mrs. McGowan had complained of a slight pain in her breast. It left her at times, then returned sharply and spasmodically. Her husband had sent her to Doctor Hewlett. On the second visit, the doctor's blue eyes, as he was making the examination, turned dull gray and hard, the only sign he ever gave that his work affected him. Instead of his usual directness, he had been evasive when he talked with McGowan afterwards. In the months he had spent in camp, the doctor admired and liked more and more the gruff contractor. So he had been a bit lax, according to his own standards, and had sent Mr. and Mrs. McGowan to a colleague in Boise to receive the news he could not deliver. The colleague had been reticent, too, and had said there was some sort of growth there, but probably not a cancer. They had said nothing to Howard, upon their return to the dam, but a few days later the boy cornered his father in the dining room and said, bluntly,

“I’m not going East this summer, dad. I’m going to stop here a while.”

The superintendent stood up quickly and left the house without a word. In the office of the hospital Doctor Hewlett was sitting alone. The big Scotchman grabbed him by the shoulder with one hand and lifted him erect.

“No nonsense, Doc. Is there anything we can do?”

This time the doctor did not equivocate. “Make her comfortable,” he said. Late that night the superintendent found a skinner beating a balky horse with a chain and knocked four of the man’s teeth loose.

Water swirled angrily behind the cofferdam and the steady chug of the centrifugals sent yellow streams back from the sump holes into the river again. The excavation, stretching all across the river beneath the cableways, was thirty feet deep, through layers of sand, clay and gravel. The gravel pile upon the hillside to the south stretched gradually down stream. Ladders led down from the sides of the cofferdam and the pumps and machines were kept on skids in case the cofferdams should leak or give way. The river reached what seemed to be an average high water mark, then receded inch by inch. By July, the men had all forgotten that the bend had ever been otherwise than dry, or that the

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two banks of the river, now spanned in the air by cables an inch and a half thick, and below by two cofferdams and a footbridge, had ever been inaccessible, one from the other. Even Otis had to get out the photographs to remember exactly what the hills and the canyonsides had looked like before he had tampered with them.

Nick's flowerbeds bloomed miraculously, around the hospital and the cottages nearby, with phlox and rhododendrons, petunias, asters and golden glow. Their vivid colors, tall stalks and graceful plumes, set off by the rich black dirt the old man had contrived, contrasted weirdly with the lavender streaks of lava and the olive green of sage. Bees, butterflies and humming-birds were colonized there and the visitors from Boise stopped to look at them more often than they paused before the pumps or the muckers in the hole. Emily watched Old Nick as he worked and sometimes tried to help with a pair of scissors or a trowel.

The poker game lost another member in Luke Buchanan, who although he had known nothing about carpentry before he took the job of helper, had learned quickly and was so well liked by the others that McGowan had made him a foreman on rough work. His wife had arrived from San Francisco and he had built a shack higher on the slope behind the Otis cottage. Mrs. Buchanan was a lean,



active woman, always implying a certain sophistication in her talk and hospitable to a high degree. She became friends with the doctor at once and through him with Mrs. Walkenhausen. In return for their kindness to him, Doctor Hewlett, when things were dull at the hospital, arranged a tea to which he invited them and also Mrs. McGowan and Emily Otis. Mrs. McGowan was unable to go, but Emily went eagerly to the hospital office, brightened at the prospect of spending a sociable hour. The doctor kept conversation moving, but the wives of the carpenter and the foreman could not shake off their constraint. Mrs. Buchanan stopped in the midst of a story she suddenly thought might not be proper, and the former elocution teacher was so careful in her choice of words that all her attempts were stilted. Emily, who responded more easily than she took the initiative, told of her winter in the East, and even to her it sounded a trifle ostentatious. She tried telling about the fire, and the doctor led her to continue and every one seemed interested, so the tea did not end too badly but there was a certain strain she had been most anxious to avoid. Her loneliness was increased, if anything. The doctor, however, was friendly with all the families and after the warehouseman had brought his daughter to keep house for him, organized a dance for which Ned Sanger, the Mor-

mon, the blacksmith with his double-B bass, and Howard McGowan furnished the music. Before mid-summer, a dance was held each week, and after a violent scene in which Warner Nichol had nearly assaulted the inoffensive Swede, Abe Johnson, Edna Butler decided to marry the rigger to avoid trouble. They built a shack near that of the barber, for she preferred not to live up the creek again.

In August, Bert Eldridge turned over the levers of his hoist to another engineer and, since the cableways were running smoothly and his work was done, left by stage for Boise and thence to Chicago to report for further orders. His farewell dance lasted until daylight and, on that occasion, Otis and Emily sat on the sidelines for a while although she did not dance. She had always been self-conscious about her movements.

Jake Thompson, coming down the creek road to get breakfast at the mess house, saw the last of the revelers leave the warehouse. He was a couple of hours ahead of time, being restless invariably when his wife was in town. So he strolled down to the cofferdam to watch the work in the hole. Across the excavation, driving a drift pin into a twelve-by-twelve upon which he was standing, a squat, crop-headed Bohunk from the Tyrol was swinging a sixteen-pound sledge. The rock foreman watched him for a while, then turned away. When he looked

back again, no one was there, but he thought nothing of it for a moment. The cableway bucket dropped down from above on its string, like a spider, struck the gravel edge-downward, lurched as the slack was taken up, then shoved its nose into the dirt. The tender clamped down the lever, high on the hill a gong sounded and the load started up, carried toward the south bank by the moving carriage as it ascended. Then Jake's eyes wandered back to the cofferdam and below it, doubled over and inert, was the body of a man. The Tyrolian had missed the pin. The rock foreman shouted to the men across the way, but no one heard him. Then he went down the ladder and looking anxiously overhead cut across the paths of both cableways and took hold of the man's shoulder. There was no response. Jake tried to listen for the man's breathing, but the noise of the machines and pumps made it impossible to hear. So he picked up a small pebble and by throwing it, underhand, he got one of the muckers to look his way. Old Nick, an early riser, too, was standing on the hill by the hospital when he saw the stretcher coming. Gleefully he clumped into the doctor's room and roused him.

"Here's another one coming up the hill," he growled and went to the operating room to pick things up a bit. The doctor dashed his head in cold water and met the stretcher bearers at the door.

Still half asleep, he put on his stethoscope and listened.

"Put him on the table," he said.

The timebook showed the man to be Stepan Riml and none of the other Bohunks knew a thing about him. He had landed square on the top of his head. After washing again in cold water and drinking a cup of black coffee Old Nick had brought without being told, Doctor Hewlett lifted the triangular piece of skull which was pressing on the man's brain, fastened it in place with silver screws and went back to bed.

"You should have been a cabinet maker, doc," said Joselyn, who was watching the operation.

Later, when the doctor awoke, Riml was breathing and his functions were proceeding feebly without a sign of conscious life, like a boat drifting on with the engine dead. Every two or three days, Doctor Hewlett would drag Otis or McGowan to the ward to see his phenomenon. The Tyrolian never moved, and was fed artificially.

Wages were still on a \$2.25 basis, and the forwarding agent at the railroad yards sent word that he was having trouble again with the Wobblies. They had tried to stage a parade and a dozen of them had been thrown in jail. Some one had poured buckets of water over six carloads of cement. The office by the side-tracks now had a telephone con-

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nected with the Lava Rock office, but the agent, unaccustomed to its use, told what he had to say to one of the freighters who delivered the message next day by word of mouth to McGowan.

The man the superintendent had thrown from the mess house, reported variously to be a member of an aristocratic Eastern family, a naturalized Nihilist and a former card sharp from Butte, had spent several weeks circulating among the farmers and ranchers in the lower valley, two hundred miles below. Those who had a little water on their land were opposed to the irrigation project. The men who were to farm the desert tracts had not arrived. The rumor spread through Boise that the dam was unsafe and that the town might be wiped out if it should give way. The mayor called the city engineer, who held his position by virtue of the fact that he worked on a land survey thirty years before. Neither of them took much stock in the complaints of the farmers but a member of the council took up their cause and demanded an investigation. His demand was printed in the only newspaper published in the state. Otis read it, and at once wrote a letter to the mayor inviting him to send a committee to Lava Rock.

"Wouldn't it have been better to wait until that hole was filled up?" Emily asked him later, with some hesitation. Otis saw at once that such

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a course would have been the wiser. He realized that her attitude toward the works, in their present state, would correspond more closely than his own to that of the town officials. It was so seldom he acted impulsively that any such move disturbed him. He discussed it with the superintendent who said, "To hell with them."

Mrs. Walkenhausen came to the office that afternoon and asked to see the engineer. She was worried about the schooling of her children. There were twenty boys and girls of school age in the camp. Otis told her he would see what could be done, and again McGowan objected. He had set out to build a dam, not to run a kindergarten.

"Still, it's better to have good men stay right through the job," Otis said.

He found that six months of residence entitled parents to have schools for their children and in thinking of this, with the problem of the agitation down the valley in his mind, decided that he would take up the matter with the town officials, who were also the county officials, when they came to inspect the works. He would offer to put up the building for them, to save them expense.

The heat was beating upon the tar paper roof and drying the sand from the hole as fast as it was spread upon the hill. Horses were soaked with sweat and leaned against the harness with erratic effort as



the skimmers snapped flies from their rumps with the lines and yelled for water. Jake Thompson's son, struggling up the hill with drills on his shoulder which was raw from their weight, stopped the boy curtly and took a drink from the dipper he had carried the week before. Otis tried to keep his mind on the tangle of associated details which buzzed around like gnats to distract him from his work. He was an engineer, not an alderman or an impressario. McGowan stuck to his work and kept the job moving. He should do the same, but he caught himself nodding and saw the damsite waver in the blur of heat waves. He would go home and take a nap, he thought, but when he arrived at the cottage, where the shades had been drawn and the fragrance of flowers helped convey the illusion of coolness, Emily said to him,

"Why, George, I didn't expect to see you for hours."

She was so pleased that he talked to her a few moments, allowed her to give him some tea which Nick had cooled beneath the faucet, talked a while about the schoolhouse and the man in the hospital who never moved, then went down the hill to see what kind of dirt the river bed was offering that day. She thought it would be splendid to have a school and sat quietly all afternoon thinking of children and school books and plans for receiving the

mayor's wife and pleasant reflections that these sturdy boys and girls who lived up the creek and across the river might, with half a chance, do better than their fathers.

## V

EACH day at noon the stage rolled in, rims singing through the sand. The driver, manipulating four lines in his left hand, brought the four sweating horses to a stop in front of the office to throw off a package or two, then went on down the hill, the brake groaning, to deposit the mail sacks at the Lava Rock postoffice at the far end of the warehouse. From there he circled the Bohunks' bunkhouses and pulled up at the stable where Ed Wilson, the stable boss, helped him unhitch. Inside the long, low stable, which smelled of alfalfa, dried timothy, manure and cinders, the rhythmic sound of munching could be heard. The horses, damp from the morning's work and twitching with flies, were at their oats and in the dimness of the interior, when one of them turned to see who was walking behind him, a white patch showed on his broad forehead or his eyes gleamed and he snorted. Some of the horses were new, others had dragged the slips along the roadway, had broken ground for the buildings, struggled up the spillway hill and

pulled the heavy stoneboats loaded with boulders to be dumped at the mouth of the tunnel. Some were large, others runted and sturdy. There were pairs which had worked together more than a year and rubbed dust from their forelocks against each other's broad necks. Ill-assorted bronchos had been shifted weekly. Many of them had skimmers who understood them, the rest were driven by men who had never had a pair of lines in their hands before.

In long ranks, side by side, stood the rows of double stalls, with bins for oats and racks for hay, with posts chewed out of shape and a ring for the halter rope. The horses slept on their feet, for the most part, after their long day's work and were stamping and stirring in the morning before the triangle clanged. The extra stage team was kept at the extreme end, far from the doorway, and knew when their alternates were led in that soon they would be led out. On odd days they trotted up the canyon, on even days they trotted down. It was all the same to them.

Ed Wilson had shifty eyes and held his jaws tightly together. He seldom spoke to a man and never to a horse, unnecessarily, but he measured the oats according to the horses' needs, healed collar burns with salve and cured stiff legs with liniment. Each noon he ate beside the stage-driver, at the second table, always smelling of horses, and in the

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hay of unused mangers he kept a package or two of liquor which the driver brought to him. When it was sold, they divided, fifty-fifty, but the stable boss was careful and never had the slightest trouble. Jake Thompson was a steady customer.

The flat between the river and the warehouse, where the stable stood, had been covered with cinders during the muddy season. Since the tunnel had been completed, the blacksmith's shop had been moved there from across the river and had been joined to the larger shop where formerly the horse-shoer had worked. After meals, the blacksmith practiced on his double-B bass, grunting gravely down to tonal depths quite unbelievable. Ned Sanger had taught him. The old circus man could play almost any instrument.

A fifth bunkhouse had been built to take care of the Bohunks, for at harvest time all the men who had worked on a ranch or a farm left the job to take advantage of the high wages in the harvest fields of all the states surrounding. Unwillingly McGowan had had to hire a lot of Greek section hands who drifted over from the Northern Pacific. The Bulgarians occupied one building, the Austrians another. Assorted Balkan nations were represented in a third. The Spaniards filled the fourth.

When the mail came in, all letters with a

foreign stamp or illegible address were tossed into a separate pile and after the rest had been distributed Joselyn helped the postmaster with the Bohunks' correspondence. The foreigners stood around, waiting for letters, and received them just before the whistle blew. In case of doubt, Joselyn knew the men who spoke English, in dialects of every conceivable flavor, and called upon them for guidance. They all distrusted the postmaster and had great faith in the timekeeper. For the former was a mild, slow-thinking man who was bewildered by the least mispronunciation of a word. Before the Lava Rock postoffice had been established, Hamilton had been in charge of the cement warehouse but McGowan did not like him and Otis did not like to have him fired because he had brought his daughter Juanita there to keep house for him and had put up a shack on the north side of the river, still further downstream from the engineer's and superintendent's houses. Otis could not bear to fire a family man, and McGowan, knowing this, was loathe to hire them. The superintendent preferred to have drifters whom he could send walking down the road, talking to themselves, whenever he felt like it.

The long, winding road up the canyon side had taken on the tone of its surroundings and now it seemed as if it had always belonged there. Freighters

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passed each other on the turnouts, men who had quit or had been fired crossed groups of men walking in to look for a job. Sometimes they did not bother to speak to one another. In many cases they would not have been able to do so. The more provident of them had a roll of belongings wrapped in a tarpaulin which they bore on their shoulders, others carried their goods in a bandanna handkerchief. The hoboes traveled light, having nothing at all. When they itched, they turned their shirt inside out.

In Boise the last saloon on the way to camp and the first one coming in had done a landoffice business for more than a year and the owner of it had built another at the left of his own establishment, promoting his bartender. Finally he had built a third in which he had installed a friend who had lost a leg. Sometimes the bartenders staked a man to a meal before he started on the long hike and weeks later, when the man came out, he would pay back what he owed and buy drinks for the house. The one-legged man was known at the dam as Gimp Farley and was the best friend the project had on the Boise city council. Doctor Hewlett, who had an incorrigible gift for making friends, got acquainted with Gimp Farley and treated him for heartburn on one of his trips to town.

One day, while the mail was being passed out,



a letter especially stamped and sealed was handed to one of the higher-class Bulgarians, Pete Flatitch a sub-foreman making \$3.50 per day. He opened it, on the platform in front of the warehouse, read a few lines and called to some of his countrymen. They gathered about excitedly, all talking at once, and when the whistle blew, instead of going to work they started for the bunkhouse.

"What's the trouble, Pete? Did some one send you a million dollars?" asked Joselyn.


"We've got to go," said Pete.

"To hell you say," said McGowan, who overheard. "You flag your tails up that hill."

"Excuse me, boss," said Pete, touching his cap. "We've got to go."

He walked up to the office with Joselyn, to help straighten out the time and to give the names of all the men who were quitting. War had been declared with Turkey. McGowan hurried away, swearing and indignant, to shift the Greeks into the hole where in their bewildered state, being new to the job, they were sure to get their heads caved in by stones from the cableway.

That afternoon, the bunkhouse on the cinder flat which usually was so quiet and deserted in the hours before the day shift got through, was the scene of odd activity. Behind it, on the river bank, the Bulgarians were washing their clothes,



slapping soggy shirts and heavy underwear against the flat stones and joking with one another. Clothes-lines were strung across to the Spaniards' bunk-house and multi-colored garments steamed in the burning sun. Straw was being gathered from the bunks and piled in the yard and a fire was built in the huge wood stove, sending up an unseasonable crooked smoke toward the sky. Pete Flatitch, who had been boss in the hole, was boss in the bunk-house and the laborers did as he directed, but his shoulders seemed more square and his voice more emphatic. One man swept the floor with a broom made of alder twigs, another was carving names upon a bench beneath the window at the back. McGowan, in passing, watched them, muttering. He had never seen a Bohunk leave a shack in order. The Greeks were stumbling over one another's feet forty feet below the surface of the river bed. The cableways were slowed up and the engineers, high upon the hill and at a loss to account for the confusion, swore and jammed their levers viciously. The low man was sure to win the pool that night. On the spillway, where Thompson was splitting up boulders to roll them down the hill between shifts, the work went on as usual. The scrapers traced their figure eight upon the gravel pile, where a screening plant was being put up by Abe Johnson, but the crux of the whole job, the excavation

which must go deeper and deeper for a solid foundation, faltered, and all because of a letter plastered over with foreign stamps.

"Why, for God's sake, couldn't Greece declare war?" McGowan said to Otis.

When the timekeeper finished his list, he took it down to check it over with Pete Flatitch and saw that every bunk had been stripped.

"I thought you were going in the morning," he said.

"Nobody sleeps to-night," said the foreman, gleefully, and then, taking Joselyn into a corner he asked him if he could get him a bottle or two of whiskey and a case of beer. He would be responsible that nobody was killed, or even cut.

"I swear," he said.

So Joselyn crossed to the stable and got what was needed from Ed Wilson who would never sell a drop to a Bohunk. The liquor was hidden away.

Otis came down the hill, trying to look stern.

"What does this mean, Pete?" he asked.

Pete Flatitch lifted his cap and explained that Bulgaria had gone to war, that they had waited a long time, a hundred years, with an outward sweep of his arms to indicate the passage of a century.

A Bulgarian started singing by the river, and the others slapped their shirts on the stones in marching time. Michel Raditch stopped them,

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pointing to the bunkhouse nearby in which the night-shift men still slept. Jake Thompson asked the Austrian boss if he was going to walk out on him but the latter shrugged his shoulders and said it had nothing to do with them. This puzzled Thompson, whose geography was hazy, but he never asked too many questions. His rock gang, having been together since the beginning of the job, worked like one man. As soon as they reached the ledge, he was to prepare the biggest blast that ever had been set off, sinking tons of black powder and cases of dynamite into pockets along the slope, to lift half the hill into the air and let it crumple to the riverbank below. He thought of this day and night, trying to decide where he should stand to get a look at such a thing. Doctor Hewlett hurried up the creek, with Edna Nichol beside him. The wife of one of the men who ran the pumps was due to give birth to a child.

At four o'clock the night-shift men began to stir and the Bulgarians wrestled in the yard, played games around a circle or scribbled letters on their empty bunks. At half-past four the triangle clanged and the messhouse filled. At five o'clock the whistle blew and the men and teams trooped down from the hills and up from the hole. Howard McGowan was working on the screening plant on the hill above the tunnel. He crossed the lower

cofferdam and was passing the warehouse on the way up the hill when Joe Stepanoff met him and asked him if he would play the organ for them that evening. Joe had never learned to do more than pick out the melodies with one finger. Howard stopped by the bunkhouse above the store to ask Ned Sanger and the Mormon if they would join him, and soon after supper the music started. Rolls of bedding and the shirts, the last of which had been dried against the stove, were stacked in one corner. The men sat upon their bunks, and in the doorway, listening silently at first. Pete gave the musicians a drink and passed the bottle down the line judiciously and soon two of the Bohunks seized one another around the waist and started a clumsy waltz, their hob-nailed boots clattering upon the floor. The tin lamp shade shivered. Others joined them, until the bunkhouse writhed with swirling men and shadows, while Ned Sanger, tobacco in his cheek, ran up and down the scale with his clarinet, the Mormon's trumpet pierced all the racket with the melody and the double-B bass umpah-umpahed in consonance with the low notes of the organ which Howard McGowan pumped as hard as he played. Some of the Bohunks kept their caps on, others jerked their tousled hair from their foreheads. A steady roar, arose, suppressed at first, but mounting as the dust and smoke filled the room

and the bottle went round. Between dances, they laughed and shouted, while on the slopes across the road the white men heard muffled sounds, looked down from the doors and windows, then went to bed. In one of the lulls, Joe Stepanoff hummed a song in Howard's ear and asked him if he could play it. The tune was in quick march time, not hard to catch. As he started the opening measures, tentatively, the men stood up from their bunks and began to sing and to cheer. The bunkhouse went completely wild, carrying along the trumpet and the clarinet and at last the double-B bass, who found the key. The words, confused at first, came clearer and in unison.

“Shu-mi Ma-rit-za  
O-ker-waw Ten-ya  
Pac-ye Die-wit-za  
Lu-to Ra-nen-ya  
Raz! Dwa! Tri! . . .”

And they mean, as nearly as they can be translated, that Bulgaria's darling little river, Maritza, is flowing with blood and that ravished maidens weep upon its banks.

The din shook the cindered flat and echoed between the hills. In the doorway of the mess-house the German cook stood, in cap and apron, a



cleaver in his hand. Two by two, the Bulgarians marched around the room, with Pete at their head and Sergeant Michel Raditch two paces to the right, behind him. The superintendent, passing along the road, came down the bank and stood in the doorway just as they started the chorus again. When they reached the Raz! Dwa! Tri! which they shouted with all their might, James McGowan forgot himself. The drone of the organ and the squeal of the clarinet became the sound of pipes and he let out the old Scottish yell he had not heard since boyhood, which sounded above the war song and the tramping of feet. Pete Flatitch saw him and tried to quiet the men, but McGowan motioned him to go on and walked quickly away, his hands behind his back. Doctor Hewlett rushed in, having brought his confinement case to a successful end, and led the singing. At daylight, the Bulgarians gathered up their clothes, threw the empty bottles into the river and started away. The timekeeper gave Flatitch a note for the forwarding agent in Boise which read, "For God's sake, send up some men."

The Bulgarians marched down the canyon from the damsite, two by two, and the sound of their song died away. Old Nick, who watched them from the crest of the hill, shook his fist at their backs.

## VI

THE rain which had been drizzling silently upon the hospital roof gathered its forces just before dawn and drummed steadily above Nick's head. He got to his feet, in the act of waking, and shuffled down the ward to shut the north windows. There were few patients,—a skinner with tick fever, a blacksmith's helper with a broken wrist, and a Greek who had had one leg sheared off. They were all at the end of the ward near the doctor's office, and half way down the room, with empty cots on either side, lay Stepan Riml. A month before he had opened his eyes and later had begun to move, first an arm, then a leg, with the doctor guiding him. Once or twice he had been on his feet, but he did nothing upon his own initiative. Nick fed him with a spoon and shaved his head around the disappearing scar which was one of Doctor Hewlett's points of pride.

As Nick returned to his cot, he heard a slight sound and saw Riml sit up straight, then swing his legs stiffly over the edge of the bed.

"Oh, you can move, can you?" the old Indian Fighter mumbled.


The Tyrolian, emaciated and in his nightshirt, his eyes staring blankly ahead, moved down the aisle at the foot of the cots, but as he walked, slowly

and with measured steps, he motioned with his hands to right and left, as if he were sprinkling something. Nick hurried into the room where the doctor slept, chuckling to himself.

"Get up," he whispered as the doctor opened his eyes. "Your bloody Hunyak's on the rampage." The doctor, accustomed to starting his motions before he was fully awake, was already erect. He stood in the door of the ward, Nick at his shoulder. The man was moving slowly between the cots, making perfunctory gestures of sprinkling with his right hand. At the far end of the ward was a wooden bureau in which towels and cotton were kept. The Tyrolian dropped to one knee and genuflected deeply before it. He turned gravely to the cots and made the sign of the cross.

"I'll be damned," the doctor said.

Deliberately and in silence, except for the rain upon the roof, the man went through a pantomime of the mass, reading soundlessly from imaginary books at the right and the left, and raising the host aloft at the end. The fever patient turned. The half light of a damp and chilly morning filtered in. Behind the celebrant the row of white cots were motionless. After the benediction, he started out to the right and walked straight into the wall. Nick and the doctor ran to pick him up and put him back to bed.



When another case of tick fever developed up the creek and a lineman got 2,500 volts which threw him from a high ladder, the doctor called on Edna Nichol to help him and as he found her a good nurse, he had her put upon the payroll. Her husband had full charge of the cableways and had laid away more money than he ever had had before. She cooked his meals, got him out of bed in time to go to work and washed the dishes evenings as he smoked and read the Pittsburgh paper. Her work at the hospital came at the hours he was on shift, so their routine was little disturbed and she added her earnings each month to the savings. She had grown fond of Warner Nichol but could never understand him, for he handled her as if she was made of brittle glass, with an awkward repression of his strength. In an effort to preserve his old feeling of independence he spoke in a dictatorial way, except in matters which he considered a woman's business and upon which he would never say a word. If they talked too long, something was invariably said which aroused his jealousy and he would question her about her past, trying to wring confessions from her which would torment him the most. Only once, when absent-mindedly she had called him "Joe" in the dark, he had grabbed her shoulders in a grip which had left marks for ten days and had thrown her from the bed. She had

tingled and wept, declaring that she loved him and he had felt ashamed of himself afterwards for having told her he was sorry.

Nichol's old bunk was occupied by Herbert Ingham, chief of the grade party. The surveyors had mapped and plotted the entire valley where the reservoir was to be and were busy measuring the excavation, setting stakes upon the spillway and laying out the screening plant. Otis had designed this so that the cableways could dump their loads of dirt and rocks directly into a hopper from which, by means of gravity, the dirt passed through a succession of screens which separated the sand, gravel and cobblestones one from the other and stored them in separate bins below which the mixing plant was to be set up. Cement was to be sucked across the river in huge pneumatic tubes from the warehouse. Luke Buchanan, who joined the poker game once a week, invited Ingham to dinner one night. There he met Mrs. Buchanan. She, longing for excitement, asked the school teacher to spend the evening with them. That evening, they danced, drank and ate a midnight lunch in the Buchanan cottage. Ingham was urged to stay, although his bunkhouse was one hundred yards away. Mrs. Buchanan and the school teacher took the double bed, and the men slept on the floor. In the morning they ate a dozen eggs for breakfast and walked

up the creek to the divide, stopping on the way back to call at Walkenheusen's.

The last of Nick's flowers had turned maroon and vivid scarlet. The broad leaves already were touched with frost and crisp chrysanthemums sustained their fullest beauty against the weather. They stopped near the hospital to admire the garden and the doctor took them through the ward. The school teacher shuddered and clung to Ingham's sleeve. Edna Nichol entered, dressed all in white, with a nurse's cap the doctor had told her how to make. As soon as she had left, Mrs. Buchanan looked knowingly at the doctor and winked.


"I'm on to you," she said, "but I won't tell."

Howard McGowan watched them pass, from the window of his parents' cottage. His father sat in a chair across the room and forgot to turn on the light when twilight came. It was the first day Mrs. McGowan had remained in bed. She insisted it was not her usual pain which kept her there, but said she must have caught a cold. When the doctor came, however, she told him she could not sleep at night and he gave her the first narcotic to enable her to do so, saying nothing to McGowan about it. He wished he did not have to carry out the ordeal to the end. He knew what would happen, and that nothing could avert it or modify it. He envied the engineers, whose designs were executed



with inert materials and whose task it was to harness nature and not to subvert its processes. Just a few yards away, he saw Otis and Emily sitting quietly over their coffee. He knocked on the door and entered, and they brightened as they saw who had come. All evening, they talked of this and that, in the soft light of the lampshade Emily's brother had sent them. Otis watched them, for the doctor and Emily carried on most of the conversation, forgetting sometimes to include him. He had no talent for small talk and preferred to listen, since when he essayed a light remark it often seemed quite flat and his serious observations had the air of having been too carefully weighed. In the cottage on the hill behind them, they heard dimly the sounds of the party the Buchanans were continuing from the day before.

Earlier than usual, that year, the rain froze to sleet and before the middle of December the hills were covered with snow, miles southward toward the badlands, northward into the forest reserve and eastward to the Sawtooth range. One Sunday morning, Old Nick left the hospital and walked up the creek with a rifle under his arm. The old Indian Fighter tramped over the divide, leaving long tracks behind him in the newly-fallen snow. He entered the forest and two hours later returned with the meat of a deer slung over his shoulder. He



went into camp through a trail which avoided the shacks of the workmen and left his burden on the operating table, telling the doctor he had a new patient for him. The cook made a roast of venison which was divided between the Otises, the McGowans and Doctor Hewlett.


The frost sank deeper into the ground, so that the footsteps of the men and horses rumbled in hollow chorus when the shifts came on or off and the steam shovel, plunging its iron snout into the spillway hill, found more resistance and overcame it. Dirt and rocks were hauled away on the dinkey track, the cableways spun their drums and kept the buckets swinging back and forth across the canyon and the river threaded its way beneath a brittle covering of ice. The thermometer sank to zero, but the work went on throughout the twenty-four hours and the blazing arc lamps were lighted in mid-afternoon when the gray sky seemed to press upon the hilltops and the scent of snow kept the horses snorting. Emily Otis lost in part her dread of the long winter, for the fires burned warmly in the cottage and the silent beauty of the snow, abstracting the shapes of numberless hills and showing the dark brush in patches, did not sap her spirits as the continuous rain had done. From her window, the men toiling on the hillsides were like beetles, scurrying back and forth as the sharp

whistle caromed between the granite and lava cliffs.

The hole was fifty feet deep and extended all the way across the river. On the south side, the granite ledge which showed through the hillside went straight down, forming an impregnable wall. The stratum of clay underlying the sand had been removed and dumped along the bank where the blacksmith shop had stood. From subterranean springs, cold water leaked into the excavation so that the Bohunks worked in hip rubber boots and the battery of centrifugals was doubled.

In his shack up the creek, Jake Thompson stood over his son, threatening to take all the hide off his back. The talk about the danger from the dam had died down somewhat in Boise and the investigation had been postponed on motion of Gimp Farley, but the county had sent up a school teacher, and twenty children gathered each day in the schoolhouse Johnson had built. Their songs and recitations could be heard up the creek. Jake Thompson's boy could neither read nor write and having outgrown the job of waterboy for that of powder-monkey, refused to go to school.

"Maybe you want to be an ignoramus like the rest of these scissorbills," said Jake, and picked up a stick of stovewood. Mrs. Thompson sided with her husband, so among the Walkenhausen girls, with ribbons in their hair, and the other small sons



and daughters of carpenters, riggers and slip-holders, Joe Thompson in a clean suit of overalls sat for four days trying to learn the alphabet. On the fifth day he lit out down the canyon without a word to anybody and Mrs. Thompson wept at the table until Jake got roaring drunk and threw things around the room. He went to bed for three days, refusing to move, although he was wide awake, and at last went back to the job.

In January, three six-horse teams struggled slowly up the canyon, resting on the road at noon, each hauling the cubical drum of a concrete mixer. McGowan watched the riggers unload the mixers on skids and shove them slowly along timber tracks to the hole where the downstream cableway lifted them spinning like toys into the air and lowered them into place on the south bank, below the gravel pile. The snow, which made the season more passable for Emily, was less reassuring to Otis who spent three days on skiis with the grade party, far up the canyon, looking over the immense watershed. The single remaining placer miner, who lived alone in his shack twenty miles above the damsite, where a hot and a cold spring gushed side by side from the rocks, told him it had snowed more in the old days and tried to remember the year in which the highest flood had occurred, but his recollections were hazy and of little use. In February there was a slight

thaw and one of the 'muckers came down with smallpox. A shack was thrown up, hastily, on the south side below the gravel pile and the doctor sent East for cartons of sealed vaccine. Some of the men stood in line to be vaccinated, others quit the job rather than have their arms scratched. Many of the best men were laid up with sore arms and the agent in Boise scoured the railroad yards. Another alarm spread through the town. The school teacher blushed and stammered when the doctor suggested that he vaccinate her on the leg, to avoid a scar upon her arm. Edna Nichol demurred for fear of a scene with her husband. She had heard Mrs. Buchanan's remark about her fondness for the doctor and since that day had felt in a vague way that what had been suspected would materialize. She became aware of each movement or glance from Doctor Hewlett, as he brushed by in the aisle or took things from her hands. He had also been made a trifle self-conscious about Edna and could not help but notice, since her hospital work had relieved the monotony of her life, that she had grown more lovely to look at. At first they were more formal with one another, then progressively less restrained. When the natural moment and opportunity came, she was stirred and radiantly happy. Evenings, in the shack across the river, she was more solicitous than ever for the comfort of Warner

Nichol and even urged him to join the card game whenever he liked and to keep up his boxing. She came to idealize the doctor, who was so competent and skillful in moments when every one else lost his head, and so gentle and almost impersonal in his affection. She felt that in a way she was serving him, as undoubtedly she was, and as her intense nature became more involved, was hazily conscious of a longing to have a child by him. Of this, she said nothing. Two more cases of smallpox developed, but they were mild and of comparatively short duration. Then the weather turned cold and the doctor breathed easier.

At twilight, sometimes, as the darkness filtered through the ravines and settled upon the slopes, the air would seem to coagulate and slowly begin to writhe. Huge soft snowflakes, like tiny pagodas, dotted the roofs of the bunkhouses and the wind, stalking down the canyon and stippling the river surface where it welled through the ice, swirled the snow aloft, then drove it steadily to the west and south. The horses starting on the night shift would huddle together, clanking their chains, and Nick would raise his arms and shake his fist at the storm, complaining of its impotence. He longed for a regular blizzard. At midnight, the night shift trooped down to the messhouse and the graveyard shift began. The engineers of the cableways, high




on the hill, warmed their hands at the drum of the hoist, but the signals came up from the hole and blindly they set the reels to spinning and snaked the carriage back and forth, dangling an unseen bucket. On the south hill, by the mixing plant, red fires glowed and the crumb boss walked from one bunkhouse to another feeding the stoves with wood as men snored in double tiers to right and left. Over and over again, in the office, Otis checked over the old computation sheets, dog-eared and worn, on which he had first estimated the capacity of the tunnel. He verified the velocity he believed would result from the smoothness of the bottom and sides, reviewed the soundings he had taken at the last high water and then, as his eyes grew tired and the figures in their neat gray rows began to writhe like the air resolving into snowflakes at twilight, he saw stretched before him the vast watershed, fringed by the peaks of the Sawtooth mountains, hills rising in ranks and battalions, hidden beneath their covering of snow, table lands progressively rising, covered with snow, ravines with their boulders rounded, trees bare of foliage and rooted in crumbling ledges. And gradually, if he was very tired, the regiments of shrouded hills seemed to advance toward the canyon in which eight hundred men toiled. A hundred yards away, in his cottage, Emily was writing letters home. The

doctor was reading Schiller in the hospital. The stable boss was snoring in the straw. He tried to prevent himself from wondering if he had reasoned coldly in making his plans to keep the hole from flooding when the freshets would groove the watershed anew in the spring. Then he would go back to his figures and find them always the same. The formulæ reposed between their accustomed pages, like flowers pressed there by men and women long since dead. His headache would disappear when he closed his eyes, and the cold air strengthened his sleep.

In March, the excavation work was concentrated upon the north side, beneath the spillway hill, and the hole went steadily down until at last the heavy iron bucket was dropped upon its nose in vain. At a depth of ninety feet below the river bed, the solid ledge of granite and porphyry was uncovered. Gradually it was bared toward the south.

The stage rolled in one day, and wrapped in a heavy mackinaw and a muffler, with his black felt hat and earmuffs on each ear, Professor Crosby stepped out. Otis hurried to shake hands with him and McGowan came quickly up the hill. Before the whistle blew for the work to start again, the three men descended the ladders and stood upon the rock foundation of the continent. They could say



nothing to the professor, and he said little to them, but his eyes and his step were eager as he scurried from one corner of the hole to another, kneeling upon the damp rocks to squint at their seams, chipping off corners to put in his pocket, turning back his head to gaze far up the slope. For the first time, the cableways were signaled to lay off work and the muckers stood around the fires. Where moisture trickled in from subterranean leaks and springs, the old man paused or jotted notes in his note book. Then they climbed the ladders and the work went on. At the upstream end of the tunnel, a flat-bottomed boat was waiting, the same one which had been used for a ferry when the hills were still bare. A cable was hitched to the pile driver hoist and slowly it was unreeled to hold the boat steady and let it move downstream. McGowan held a banjo torch and they entered the core of the southern hill. When the vein of lava showed through the arch, the signal was given to stop and Professor Crosby sketched it roughly. The next day he left for the east, chuckling as the train rushed through sagebrush flats and prairies.

The sun broke through and the river rose a foot. Then it turned cold once more. Otis went to his cottage only for meals and a few hours sleep, and for days he did not enter the office. As fast as the bedrock was bared, he stood over the men as

they scrubbed it with stiff brushes, then covered it with a mixture of cement and water. Where the springs leaked through the cracks, cement was forced in under compressed air until not another ounce would go. Ingham was also constantly on the job, and as the first concrete was mixed with steaming hot water and covered at once with hay, he hit upon a plan for placing it by means of movable troughs on swivels. Otis saw at once the value of the idea. McGowan agreed, and the carpenters were kept busy three shifts a day until the troughs were made. The water level crept up the sides of the cofferdam, but the peak of the flood could not be reached for six more weeks.

On the first evening he was free, Ingham was invited again to dinner at the Buchanans'. The school teacher was there and at the table Mrs. Buchanan, joking about being tired of her husband after all those years, kept up a stream of banter with Ingham, so that the school teacher, in order to carry out the spirit of the situation, flirted openly with Luke. They drank more than usual, and continued, each acting for the other's benefit, until late in the evening. The girl let herself go, laughing hilariously and enjoying, without considering it at all, the fact that she had succeeded in stirring Buchanan beyond the point where he was entirely in fun. Ingham, who was the soberest of


the quartet, began to be uncomfortable, then drank more and forgot about it. Buchanan insisted upon taking a walk. Mrs. Buchanan said it was too cold but urged the teacher to go. When they were alone, Ingham started to take her upon his knee but suddenly she caught herself and they sat in separate chairs talking of the fine time the others must be having.

Outside the door they heard the school teacher sobbing. The door opened and she tumbled in, panting for breath, her clothes torn and covered with snow. Ten yards behind her Luke Buchanan staggered toward the house. His face was bloodless and his eyes distended. He stood in the doorway, moaning and striking his temples with both fists. Ingham held his arms. Buchanan struggled loose and stood before him, hands at his side. Tears were streaming down his cheeks and his lips were bleeding.

"Kill me," he said. "I don't care what you do. Kill me."

Mrs. Buchanan was bending over the teacher whom she had stretched out on the couch.

Ingham forgot the women altogether. He tried to place his hand on Buchanan's shoulder, to make him understand his sympathy for him. Luke tore away, again, and ran from the house, without a hat or coat. All night he stumbled down the can-



yon, leaving tracks in the snow an inch from the edge of a precipice, zigzagging back and forth across the road. As he reached the divide at the mouth of the canyon he saw a light in the Barberton roadhouse and headed for it. He entered, covered with snow, his teeth chattering, eyes staring straight ahead. The bartender knew he was from the dam and poured out a hot rum, forcing him to take it. Luke leaned against the bar and looking through the doorway saw the swimming pool in the room adjacent. Without a word he threw himself into it, clothes and all. The bartender heard the splash, and going to the doorway saw he could not swim. He jumped in after him and they struggled together in the water, which flowed in from a natural hot spring. At last the bartender got one arm free and smashed Buchanan square between the eyes, then hauled him limply from the tank, carried him upstairs and locked him in. In the cottage at the damsite, Mrs. Buchanan had quieted the teacher who within an hour or two recovered from her fright. Ingham stood awkwardly around. Mrs. Buchanan's face was set and she did not mention her husband's name.

"I'll go and see if I can find him," Ingham said, but she asked him not to bother, not to leave them alone.

Buchanan awoke in the dark, all the objects



around him strange to his touch, and as blurred fragments of the evening forced their way inside his skull he began to scream. A whore named Alfy, tall and rangy, was in the next room. She fumbled with the key outside the door and came in, striking a match.

"What's eating you?" she asked.

She lighted the lamp and sat on the edge of the bed, trying to calm him, talking cajolingly as if he were a child. Then as the flame burned brighter, she looked closely at his face.


"Why, you're not drunk," she said.

She sat there in a soiled pink ballet skirt and low cut bodice, rolling a cigarette. Buchanan moaned and turned his face to the wall. The bartender stuck his head in the door.

"I'll take care of him," Alfy said.

He was fully dressed, his clothes still wet, and his teeth began to chatter.

"You better have one good shot of whiskey, so's you won't get your death of cold," she said. He answered none of her remarks and began beating his face again. She grabbed his wrists, got him out of bed and downstairs to the bar which was empty at dawn. The whiskey sent the blood to his head and tingled all his nerves. Alfy kept up a continual stream of talk, expecting no answer and paying for the drinks with gold pieces she took from her



slipper. As she talked, he took another drink and a third. A man appeared in the doorway and greeted Alfie cordially. It was Ned Sanger, clarinet case under his arm. The old circus man joined them at the bar. After an hour he took out his instrument and began to play. The whore grabbed Buchanan and started to waltz. It made him dizzy, but he kept on until the music stopped. As soon as his clothes were dry, he thought, he would go on to Boise and take a train somewhere. He had no money, but he thought some one would lend him enough. He saw the prairie rushing by the windows, frightened bunches of horses tossing their heads, water tanks and converging rails flashing backwards. Ned Sanger was talking in an undertone with the bartender. He had intended to take his clarinet to Boise, but he had run out of money and asked to leave it for a loan. The bartender gave him a twenty-dollar gold piece which Ned tossed back on the bar to buy another drink. Back in camp Mrs. Buchanan was cooking breakfast for the others. The bartender placed the clarinet on a shelf.

"Don't let it get wet," Ned cautioned him.  
"I'll get it next week."

The cook got up and fried some ham and eggs. They drank whiskey between mouthfuls. Sanger imitated the Buffalo Bill show coming into town, ballyhoo man, band and all. The house never missed


a turn in buying. When the twenty dollars were gone, the bartender tossed out another and marked it in his book. But by mid-afternoon, the circus man who had been walking since two in the morning, got sleepy and they rolled him into the room Buchanan had occupied. The bartender went out to clean up around the swimming tank and in the deadly quiet, the terror of the night before forced its way again to Buchanan's mind. He turned white and sick and utterly sober. Alfy put her arm around his shoulder.

"What's wrong?" she asked. "You haven't gone and killed some one?"

He broke down and told her what had happened, sobbing and clenching his hands.

"Shucks, that's nothing," she said. "The chippy just led you on. You get shaved, Bill's got a razor, and go on home and if your wife says anything to you, poke her one."

Three or four men had come in and were lined up at the bar but Buchanan had not noticed them. He took another drink which he felt as if it were the first one. Sanger came downstairs and as soon as the opportunity came, the big whore got him in a corner and impressed upon him that he must take Buchanan home. He promised he would do so. Leaning against the counter, between Alfy and the old circus man, Buchanan felt him-




self gradually persuaded. He began to share her view that he was in the right, that nobody would lord it over him, that whatever he had done was done and any one could like it or not. Before dark, he started back up the canyon with Sanger beside him. They mounted the long hill, with the valley behind them, rounded the bend and followed the turns of the roadway as the sun broke through the clouds and illumined the tops of the snow-covered hills. The road was muddy and soft and as they walked, Sanger passed him a bottle at intervals. Jumbled bewilderingly with the sunlit ravines and angry segments of the river far below were tableaux coming helteriskelter from the twenty-four hours just past, the darkness of the strange room, Alfy in black silk stockings and a ballet skirt, smelling of stale powder, the whirl of the waltz to the strains of the clarinet, the splashing of hot water in the tank. Sanger was concentrating his efforts to get him home, as he had been told to do. They covered ten miles before dark and in another hour drained the last of the bottle as the glow of the Lava Rock camp came into sight far up the river.

The numbness of fatigue and strain upon his nerves dulled his feelings with each step and he plodded on mechanically, the lights ahead moving away as fast as he walked, then gradually allowing themselves to be overtaken. The first shack was

Hamilton's and the postmaster sat in his window. Then the creek on the slopes of which six men were buried. The road took him past the Otis cottage and the superintendent's house and at the office Sanger led him off to the left and into the path which would bring him to his door. Fifty yards away the old circus man gave him a gentle push and watched until he entered.

## VII

THE rock ledge which had lain hidden one hundred feet below the old riverbed was bare. From hill to hill, one hundred yards across and for an equal distance up and down stream, the sides of the excavation showed the successive strata of sand, gravel, blue clay, coarse gravel and granite ribbed with porphyry. The hammers kept up a ragged fusillade against the forms and Otis, standing on a plank by one of the sump holes, studied the thin covering of rocks, dirt and vegetation which had lent the foothills their appearance since the last geologic upheaval and which, when exposed, seemed ineffectual and almost transparent. Jake Thompson and his Austrian rock gang were blasting a six-foot niche into bedrock, all across the bottom, so that the dam would be set firmly into its solid foundation and could not slide downstream no



matter what pressure was put behind it. To prevent its cracking at the level of the bedrock, heavy railroad rails were set vertically into the forms to reënforce the concrete. The north half of the bottom had been covered with a thin layer of pure cement and water and Otis had watched every foot of the rock flooring scrubbed with a stiff brush to make a perfect contact. This he had insisted upon doing in daylight. Sometimes McGowan would stand beside him, smiling tolerantly, then go on about his work. The crew numbered eleven hundred and was increasing gradually.


All day and night, fresh concrete ran down the troughs from the mixing plant and was placed in the forms. Men tamped around the planks with iron rods, scraped out the troughs with spades, rolled bowlders into place, carried lumber on their shoulders. The Bohunks who had been covered with yellow mud the year before now had cement dust in their hair and on their overalls. White men walked over from Utah and Wyoming and the distant counties of Idaho, after planting time. A few of them noticed, as they made their way up the canyon that the river was higher than it had been when they came in the previous year, but many of them noticed nothing. They greeted the men they had known, learned the newcomers' names and settled back to their old jobs.



“It’ll take ’em a week to get the wrinkles out of their bellies,” the cook remarked. He had no great opinion of dry farming.

Buchanan was made foreman of the crew which ripped off the forms in sections after the concrete was set and shifted them south, in the direction Thompson was working and where the ledge rose abruptly into the lava. His face was drawn and he had lost his geniality. Some one said that he had stomach trouble. His wife had received him with cool politeness and had reminded him of a bargain they had made when soon after their marriage she had suspected him of flirting. Each time he saw her talking with a man he grew dizzy and one afternoon when he had seen her go up the creek alone he had quit in the middle of a shift and had gone home to wait for her. For the most part, he worked doggedly and was absent-minded when any one spoke to him. Once or twice he narrowly escaped being hurt in the hole which swarmed each day with more diverse activity. The mixers revolved on the south hill, fed through a series of screens from the gravel pile, and the dull gray-green of cement and its stuffy odor grew more pronounced in the noonday sun.

Because he spent the entire day shift on the works, Otis was obliged to stay in the office until late each evening and then, before going to bed, he



would hurry down the hill, almost surreptitiously, to read the gauge at the outlet of the tunnel. Emily kept herself busy for a time in the afternoon watching Nick spade his flowerbeds. She had not complained during the winter, and had tried to appear vivacious when Otis arrived at the cottage, but the hours dragged and her hope that spring would relieve her boredom had proven false. She knew her husband was worried, but could not discuss his problems with him. In fact, she had learned that he was most reticent about things which affected him most deeply. He would explain the broad lines of his plan, would talk enthusiastically about the magnitude of the work, and in cases where luck favored him would tell her almost gleefully about it. But his disappointments or apprehensions he liked to keep to himself. The wind did not blow as steadily as it had in the winter months, still as she stood beside Nick she was always aware her skirt was flapping, that the grasses swayed, that the clothes upon Mrs. Buchanan's line fluttered and cracked like a whip. And lately, a sound had come from the river, mounting steadily, a sort of drone which became a roar and again a whisper, like the inside of a seashell. Its persistence often made her want to scream. She tried to read, but the magazines did not interest her. She liked best books of travel or information and there was no way to get

them. If she wrote home for anything, it arrived two months later, when her need for it had passed.

Dutifully, two or three times a week, she called upon Mrs. McGowan who seldom left her bed. The doctor had cut off her breast, just to appear to be doing all he could, but he had known the operation would retard only slightly the progress of her disease. Emily could not bear the smell of medicines and never could be sure that her show of cheerfulness at the bedside was not annoying to the older woman. She could not act a part. The spectacle of a human being in process of being eaten away by a malignant growth horrified her, outraged her sense of universal gentleness and she knew her face must show it. Still Mrs. McGowan was always glad to see her.

"James paces around like a bear," she said.

Twice each day Edna Nichol came down from the hospital to give Mrs. McGowan a hypodermic and so for a few hours the gaunt Canadian woman found relief from the throbbing in her breast and mused upon the things which were in her head. From the day of her marriage she had never stayed three years in the same place nor had she been an actual member of a community. She remembered old cuts and fills, railroad rails and sleepers, bunks made of packing cases. She recalled gray tents in the sagebrush and visits to Minneapolis between con-


tracts, bankbooks filled with figures and weeks when everything had had to be scraped together to meet the payroll. It had all puzzled her, mildly, earth-works springing up here and there, estimates being paid, lawsuits pending. Her husband had always been the central figure of the camps, the man who hired men and fired them. The workmen's women had always been shy of her in much the same way although she had tried to be neighborly. Now that James McGowan paced back and forth in the cottage, completely baffled, he scarcely seemed like the man she had lived with thirty years. She wished he would pull himself together and was glad that the spring rush would take his mind from her. She did not think she was going to die. It was as if she had gotten on a wrong train and was anxiously waiting for the next stop, to get off. The pain did not seem to belong to her and when it subsided she almost forgot about it. She liked the gentle way in which Edna handled her, and was surprised to see how thin her legs were, when the sheets were changed. The sound of the whistles and blasts reached her faintly, and vaguely she knew that her husband was troubled about the sudden thaw.

For the sun had cleared the air, the sky was blue and before the day shift got fairly started the distant accumulation of snows in the mountains began to slump and to settle. The chill of the night

was not quite enough to crust them over again. Water trickled down the gullies, between the gnarled roots of trees, in the cracks of the ledges. Gophers showed their heads at midday in the piles of lava rock.

On the upstream side the swollen river lapped against the cofferdam, stained deeper with ocher each day and rising inch by inch. Mud crunched upon the floors of all the buildings, as the men trooped in or out, and the battery of centrifugals spewed continual pulsing streams from the rim of the lower cofferdam where the backwater from the tunnel swirled and eddied. Rocks which had been dumped there stirred and tons more were tumbled in to break the force of the current. Some of the Greek section hands who had been let go during the winter drifted back and were taken on again. Whoever came up the canyon was hired.

Joselyn entered the names in his timebook and showed the men who could not sign their name to the payroll where to make their cross. Once in a while, a man would forget himself and sign a name he had not intended and Joselyn would look tactfully away until he had altered it. When a man came up the valley into the foothills, the timekeeper believed he should be permitted to leave his past behind him. He became less and less inclined to pry into any one's business. He had less



to say at the table, went earlier to bed and looked more owl-like behind his rim glasses. Early in the winter he had made a trip east to Saint Paul, realizing in a dim way that he needed a change. But in the city he had found the store clothes uncomfortable. He had bought a new suit, dark gray, very much like his last one, and a special kind of overshoes a lumberjack had recommended to him. He had called upon a few old acquaintances and had found them occupied with city work and children and politics he no longer understood. In a hotel lobby he had run across a carpenter from the dam and they had stood at the bar for hours together, talking of Lava Rock, until the camp had glowed in their memories. They had shaken hands profusely and had taken the midnight train, west-bound, together. Soon after his arrival he had encountered Edna Nichol on her way to the hospital and had told her of his trip. She enjoyed his friendliness and believed he was the only man in camp who might suspect her passion for the doctor. Often she was tempted to speak to him directly about it, as if he were a sort of confessor. He felt his old affection for her rekindle again and tried to let her know, but did not seem to find a way to broach the subject. Still, it made him glad to get back to camp and the doctor told him his vacation had done him good. Once in a while, if he finished



his rounds in time, Joselyn would saddle up a horse and ride with Ingham ten miles upstream to read the gauge there. One day they saw the one remaining old prospector and placer miner, who had a shack fifteen miles further up, trudging toward them with a pack on his back. The remnants of his shack were just being swirled through the tunnel. The old man sat behind Ingham's saddle and when they reached camp, McGowan gave him a job as night watchman and a place to sleep. A cut bank had caved in just above his place and had turned the current against the small promontory on which he had lived for forty years. In two days his land, shack and all, had been washed away. He was sure, now, that he had never seen the water so high in May. The tunnel gauge showed the level to be within three feet of the previous high water mark. There had been six days of intense sunshine. All the hills around were rich with their awakening colors. Meadowlarks sang on the slopes.

In the office, George Otis and the big Scotch superintendent sat across the drafting table, looking out of the window.

"How does it look to you?" the superintendent asked at length. They could no longer avoid discussing the situation.

"It's a tough break," said the engineer, and lowered his eyes a moment. He had tried to allow

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for the worst in his figures, he had sunk thousands of dollars into diversion works which might never have been used, but as he had computed each stress and strain, as he had estimated each force and velocity, he had hoped, like a man with a promising hand of cards and great need for luck, that just in that particular year the snows would melt gradually. The sun, the spring with its sudden eloquent burst of beauty, was a gayly caparisoned enemy, encamping on every side. Nature had answered his feeble challenge when he had hoped she would pass it by.

The two men sat a while without speaking, deep disappointment and chagrin upon their weather-brown faces, the lines deepening around their eyes. There was nothing to say. There was little to do. They had tested every pile before it had been driven into the cofferdam. They had dumped rock between and around the timbers until there was room for no more ballast. The pumps were in order and were chugging at full capacity. The heavy machinery was on skids. But the hole was one hundred feet deep and one hundred yards square and it had taken them a year to dig it. If the river should get away from them, in two hours all signs of their excavation would be obliterated, the old channel would be level again, with sand, stones, machinery and men all scrambled together

to fill the gap between the hills which they had painstakingly caused to be made.

"It ought to hold," McGowan said.

"Yes, it ought to hold," repeated Otis.

'And they went down the hill, again.

### VIII

OTIS awoke with a start, his heart pounding. The roar of the river was confused with his dream and with the sounds he had heard as he had sunk to sleep. He jumped from the bed and listened by the window, hearing noises everywhere, the sibilant brushing of water along the bank, the drone and rumble of stones bumping along the bottom, the whir of the steam shovel over the hill, the chug of the pumps and the faint clatter in the mess-house. All were jumbled together, sorting themselves reluctantly as his mind cleared. He waited for the ringing in his ears to stop, then listened carefully again. The sound rose in pitch, then seemed to fall. It surrounded the house, then moved away. Emily spoke to him.

"Come back to bed, George. You haven't slept an hour," she said.

He crawled back between the sheets and lay there. His muscles cramped as he held them tense. His head ached dully. His throat was dry. He

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waited until his wife fell asleep once more, then got up quietly and dressed in the dark. At the bedside he hesitated, knowing she would be frightened if she awoke and found him gone.

"I won't be long," he said.

She sat up, protesting. "Oh, please don't go," she urged. "There's nothing you can do."

"This won't last many days," he said. She remained half-erect as he passed out the door. On the way to the works he noticed a light across the river in the Nichol shack. Warner was trying to read the Pittsburgh paper by lantern light.

The full moon rose behind the hills which deployed toward the badlands, touching the peaks and the cableway towers which reared their gaunt skeletons over the excavation. The mixers were running and a gang of carpenters were ripping off a section of forms. Men scraped here and there with shovels, in the glare of the arc lights. At the tunnel outlet, a solid wall of water hurled itself to foam as it hit the old channel and tore on downstream. The gauge was submerged.


Shivering from lack of sleep, Otis climbed quickly down into the hole. One of the foremen tried to stop him as he crossed beneath the cableway, saw who he was, then muttered with surprise. Water in the sump holes had risen a trifle, but the pumps were almost holding their own. As he stood

there, one of the centrifugals choked, spluttered, then resumed its pulsing stroke. A mechanic's helper hurried to see what was wrong. Repair men were oiling the steam shovel. On all sides, the scattered work of the graveyard shift was going on, with darkness driven beyond the hills by the huge clustered lamps and the moon rising imperceptibly.

In the cottage, Emily was trying to reason away her timidity. She lighted the lamp, dressed, then put on a heavy coat and sat hunched in an armchair.

Otis mounted the ladder on the upper cofferdam and peered over the side. There was no light at the inlet, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness he saw the Boise gather itself, swell like an angry python and ram its full force against the hole in the hill. There was less than a foot clear at the top of the archway and already the ripple of the backwater could be seen along the north bank. A tree clutched swiftly with its torn roots at the tunnel roof, clung a moment, then was whisked away.

Until dawn, Otis paced back and forth on the timbers of the cofferdam, looking down into the huge cribs which had been loaded to the brim with granite. The crest was two feet higher than the tunnel entrance. As soon as it was light, Otis went to the bunkhouse above the store to rouse Ingham



and the surveyors. Quick contours at the level of the cofferdam were run simultaneously on either bank of the stream. The muckers looked up, surprised to see the engineers so early in the morning. Otis and Ingham scribbled figures in their notebooks, computing roughly the space the backwater could occupy before it began to pour over the top and into the excavation.

Some of the day shift men who had finished breakfast early saw the surveyors at work and noticed that Otis was directing them and figuring on the cofferdam. For several days there had been talk that the hole was unsafe. One of the laborers who tended a concrete chute and who was tired of the job said he wasn't going to risk his neck and started up the hill to ask for his time. Three or four others followed him. The news spread quickly through the messhouse that a bunch were quitting because the cofferdam was about to break.

McGowan, coming down from his cottage, met the group on their way up the hill and asked one of them what was the matter. The concrete man answered him curtly.

"Don't one of you yellow sons of bitches show your head around this job again," roared the Scotchman.

Ingham was sent on horseback to the upper gauge with instructions to light a fire on the hill



if the water was rising rapidly. As the whistle blew, the old prospector came down the creek from the waterworks where he had watched alone all night, his long white hair and shaggy beard awry. He went on past the warehouse, talking to himself, down the bank by the Bohunks' bunkhouses and stood on the river bank, waving his arms and haranguing the waters which almost drowned his voice. Doctor Hewlett watched him from the road and cheered.

"He's crazy as a sheepherder," said Old Nick and went away, mumbling.

Together, Otis and McGowan descended the ladder and looked again at the sump holes. The seepage had increased. They went from one corner of the excavation to the other, trying to find where the leaks had started. Suddenly the superintendent looked upward at one of the cribs.

"Is that sagging, or not?" he asked.

Otis thought he saw a bulge in the timbers. He told the transit man to line in with the edge of the crib, from the north bank, and to watch it through the instrument. From the top of the cofferdam, again, he saw the school children, with colored paper baskets and streamers in their hair, going over the divide on a picnic.

The rock gang had started drilling, under the cliff on the south side. As soon as the work was

under way, the Austrian boss called Jake Thompson aside. He had heard the talk in the messhouse and had vaguely understood it.

"Is it all right?" he asked Jake, pointing to the cofferdam. "My countrymen do as I say," he added, anxiously.

Jake turned on him, abruptly.

"It's all right," he said, jerking his thumb toward Otis.

The drills stuttered and clanked against the granite. At noon the whistle blew, but Otis remained where he was, his eyes straining upriver for the smoke he hoped he would not see. On the north bank he saw Old Nick shouting at him. Emily wanted him to come to lunch. He walked up the hill beside the old Indian fighter, as if he were being led somewhere against his will. He was tired, but his weariness had benumbed his body, like warm water, and he was aware of a strange desire to laugh. He ate hurriedly, telling of comical things that had happened below and left the house, forgetting to say good-by. Emily was more non-plussed by his levity than she had been by his silence. As she looked from the window, the whole camp took on an alien, fantastic aspect. She shivered, although the fire was burning briskly.

Early in the afternoon she called at the Hamilton shack, fifty yards downstream, and found the

postmaster's daughter, Juanita, alone and pensive. They talked of a few trivial things, the girl rather absent-mindedly, but before an hour had passed, Juanita grew confidential and confessed she was in love with Doctor Hewlett. For weeks past she had visited the hospital as often as she could find excuse, with pains in her back or her shoulders or the arches of her feet. Emily, confused and uncomfortable, got away as fast as she could and was alone again.

Just before dark, Ingham came riding down the canyon, his clothes still showing signs of having been soaked. The trail where it passed close to the river had caved in beneath his horse, they had both escaped from drowning narrowly and his matches had been wet. The water was rising on the upper gauge, but more slowly. He believed the peak of the flood was near. The backwater was within a foot of the rim of the cofferdam. Twilight hovered reluctantly around the hills, then the gorges let the dusk rise gradually to fill them. Otis, standing on a timber, thought he felt it trembling. Anxiously he stood upon the bank, testing his legs to see if fatigue was playing tricks upon him. He mounted the cofferdam again, and was sure he felt it vibrate. He called to one of the carpenters to bring him a level and placed it lengthwise along the timber. The bubble shivered back and forth.

The wind was blowing faintly downstream and had started ripples in the pool of backwater which spread between the hills. Otis remembered the rivers of Maine, in logging time, and sent for the sawmill foreman. The latter strung twelve-by-twelves in a line half-way across the river, to break the slight force of the waves.

The steady throb of the pumps faltered suddenly. One of them missed, gurgled, then went dead. The master mechanic came running with a pipe wrench in his hand. For an hour, men fumbled with the pump, changing nuts and washers, while the work went on around them and the water rose below. Otis stood watching, standing aside to let the workmen pass. Dimly he began to admit the thought of disaster, until it seemed as if he had always expected it. The cofferdam held. He was surprised. Men were placing concrete, hammering forms. The pump had played out. The timbers trembled.

"It's no use, we'll have to take it out," the master mechanic said. "Get the other lads to help you."

Three men from the day shift were called from their bunkhouse. The Mormon boy who played the trumpet took hold of the suction hose with white cotton gloves, brand-new. Skids were shoved into place, the huge centrifugal was jacked

up and inch by inch, with crowbars, it was pried toward the north end of the lower cofferdam. At the warehouse, a spare pump was being mounted to take its place. The light was bad, slim shadows of legs and arms crossing like scissors in the glow of the lanterns. The men with the crowbars heaved, a timber slipped, the heavy centrifugal turned on its side and protruding from beneath it was the pale face of the Mormon lad and one white glove. He did not cry out, there was no sign of blood. Only a sick sort of smile played around the corners of his mouth. The jack was thrown into place and, as the doctor came rushing down the hill, the weight was lifted from the boy's body. As he stooped in the lantern light, Doctor Hewlett's eyes turned gray and hard once more and his face muscles strained to keep from moving. He motioned to the stretcher and helped lift the boy upon it, then he turned to where Otis was standing, biting his lips, and waiting to ask a question. The stretcher proceeded up the hill, a lantern swinging beside it. As the doctor made no move to go, Otis's face showed surprise.

"He's gone," the doctor said. "He's crushed inside."

The pump had reached the bank and was covered with canvas. Doctor Hewlett hurried away. Otis looked into the darkness where he had seen

the boy's white face and a weight began to press upon his own body. The lights in the excavation blurred and he sat down heavily upon the timber, retched with nausea and clinging to the piles to keep from rolling off the edge. For a long time he sat there, looking at the water, hearing the stutter of the drills and the mingled noises from the hole. He caught himself nodding with sleep. All importance had been drained from things. He thought he might as well go home and started walking, but absently he left the road and turned across the footbridge.

"Is that you, Sam?" a woman asked. He found himself facing the barber's wife.

"Oh, excuse me," she said.

He stopped beside her. She liked to be out of doors, at night, and often waited on the bridge for her husband to return from the card game. She turned to go, then something in his expression stopped her.

"You don't look well," she said. And Otis began to cry. He leaned against the rail of the bridge, and tried to control his sobbing. She looked at him more closely and at once knew what was wrong. She had seen her six-foot brothers cave in from exhaustion many times before.

When his shoulders stopped shaking she took him firmly by the arm. "You're all in," she said.



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"I'll take you home." And that seemed just what Otis had wanted. He went with her, leaning heavily upon her arm and she felt a strange satisfaction in the strain upon her shoulder muscles and her legs. They reached the Otis cottage and she rang the bell. Emily opened the door and stood there, bewildered. Before she had a chance to be alarmed, the barber's wife said, "There's nothing to worry about. He's tired, that's all. He ought to go to bed."

Otis saw the coverlet beyond the open bedroom door and made for it, stretching full length with all his clothes on. He was sound asleep in half a minute.

"I'll help you undress him," the barber's wife said.

Emily gasped as she saw the other woman lift his two-hundred-pound bulk from side to side. When the barber's wife started to go, she did not ask her to remain but her face showed so plainly her dismay that Mrs. McKinnon took off her coat and sat a while with her. Otis was fast asleep and gradually Emily grew calm.

"I'm so much obliged," she said.

"That's nothing at all," said Mrs. McKinnon.

But as she crossed the bridge, where her husband was waiting for her, puzzled, the tall Irish girl stepped briskly, and sang to herself. She had enjoyed handling such a heavy man, again.

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"What's wrong at the works?" she asked.

"The cornet player's dead," the barber replied.


"Ned Sanger's all broken up over it."

They entered the shack and shut the door.

In the morning, when Otis reached the works, still a bit dazed from sleep, the tunnel inlet was hidden by the flood and the surface current which formerly had converged to dive beneath the hill had turned northward and swirled against the cofferdam, so that the backwater eddied and washed loose sand from the north bank. As he stood there, a huge snag drifted down the river and jammed against the inlet wall, clinging there. Other floating logs and débris were caught, boards and roots up-ended, with foam churning around and through them. One of the Spanish riggers, who was mending a pile driver on the south bank, climbed down quickly from his perch. He mounted the ladder of the cofferdam and stood beside the engineer, pointing to the tangle which was blocking the tunnel arch, then waved his hand toward the cableway. He could not speak a word of English, but Otis dimly understood. He called the signal man and the cableway carriage, high in the air, slid slowly out over the canyon, dangling a long chain. As it swung within reach, the Spaniard grabbed it, went up hand over hand, clung with his ankles and waved to the signal man again. The carriage moved

south until he was directly over the snag, then another pulley revolved and let him slowly down until the spray drenched his legs. The pulley stopped rolling and he hung there, like a spider, the yellow torrent sweeping beneath him, gurgling into the tunnel, adding timbers and torn branches to the mass which had stuck there. The Spaniard slung the loose end of the chain skillfully around the largest log which was holding the rest, then waved again, climbing the chain as it tightened beneath his hands. Thirty feet over the rushing water, the rigger felt the pull from above and the tug of the river below. The drum of the hoist, high up on the hill, set itself and then reversed its motion. Link by link the stout chain was drawn in. Boards and branches cracked like pistols as the log was drawn up through them and in an instant those remaining were sucked out of sight beneath the hill and a moment later catapulted from the outlet and broken to bits upon the stones. But the water had risen within ten inches of the top of the cofferdam and the extra strain placed upon the timbers during the blockade had shaken the carpenter's level into the water. Ingham, who had ridden upstream at daylight, came galloping back, his horse snorting for breath and covered with lather. The stream was still rising, but even slower.

McGowan joined them, and they looked down



into the hole. Jake Thompson's gang were preparing for a blast. Yards of concrete were being poured into the forms.

"Tell them not to shoot," Otis said, and as McGowan started down the ladder, he called him back.

The movements of the men far down in the excavation resolved themselves into circles and figure eights, like the eddies behind the cofferdam. Otis saw the face of the Mormon boy, the syringas stippling the hills, the continuous swirl of brown water, and the timbers trembling beneath his feet.


"Clear the hole," he said, simply, then looked back at the water. The superintendent started to speak, then went down the ladder. Instantly the word went round. The Bohunks, who had heard only what their boss had told them, were seized with panic, dropping their shovels and rushing for ladders. Jake Thompson stood at the foot with a pick handle and drove them into line. The carpenters clambered up on the north side, ashamed to hurry yet unable to hold back. With the drills and hammers still, the throbbing of the pumps rose ominously and the mixers turned more slowly, then came to rest. For the first time since the old professor had walked upon the bed rock, the excavation yawned lifelessly. The master mechanic came up to ask about the machines. His Spaniards would

work, he said. Otis told him to save the drills. He was trying to decide what would happen when the water reached the top. Would it pour over, simply flooding the hole, or would the barrier give way and let the full force of the flood sweep downstream, taking away the cement warehouse and the stable and the Bohunks' bunkhouses and the mess-house? The hole would break its force, he thought. Then the transitman came to say that the crib was sagging.

"We'd better not stand here," McGowan said, and they walked to the north bank. A hundred feet downstream, a rock from the spillway above rolled down and smashed against a pile of boulders. As Otis turned, involuntarily, to look in the direction from which it came, an idea stirred in his mind as if the sound of the rock had dislodged it.

As eager now as he had been numb the moment before, he yelled to the master mechanic. There was one more way to reënforce the cofferdam.

"Run a dinkey track across the top," he said. A pile of four-foot logs stood near the cement warehouse. On the spillway, five hundred feet above them on the hillside, a track was already standing to take away cars of dirt from the steam shovel there. The master mechanic ran up the pathway, clinging to the sage brush to catch his breath. Men



on the hill began stirring, and a section of track was tumbled bodily down the slope. The rails which hit the rocks were bent, the others left intact.

McGowan caught on at once and helped to carry the rails and logs. As the water encroached another inch upon the timber, the track was laid fifty feet from the north side and went on steadily. One by one, the upper cableway picked up the steel cars from the spillway and set them down by the cofferdam. The downstream cableway was bringing the bowlders from the dump below the spillway and piling them beside the cars. The track stuck out one hundred and fifty feet when the noon whistle blew. Nobody stopped work. Otis's face was streaked with sweat and stone dust. The superintendent had taken off his vest. Jake Thompson was acting as signal man, Abe Johnson was lugging rails. From the doors of the bunkhouses, men watched them, trying to guess what was happening. Already the Bohunks were taking advantage of the layoff to wash their shirts and socks.

"Heads up," yelled the signal man and from the level of the hilltops, spinning ludicrously, the dinkey engine was swung out and lowered. Thompson waved his arms, ducked his head, swallowed his wad of snuff and then shouted as he shoved around the front end and the engine settled exactly on the tracks. Six men lifted cars to the rails and coupled



them. Boulders that could be lifted were thrown in by hand, the cableways handled the big ones. As fast as a car was loaded, the engine tugged the train with its load of granite another eight feet out over the cofferdam. At three o'clock the line of cars stretched clear across the canyon, with eighty tons of rock to hold the structure down. The dinkey engineer shut off the valves, and the men went together to the mess house. As they were eating, Stepan Riml in overalls and a hospital shirt came through the doorway. He passed between the long tables, making gestures of sprinkling toward the benches, until Old Nick entered, cursing, and took him back to the ward.

## IX

THE days were hot, even in the hospital, where the windows were shaded and covered on the sunny side with vines. Insects droned, sometimes audible above the sound from the transformer station, again submerged. Edna Nichol sat alone in the office, her light hair moist at the temples, her hands at rest. The old prospector came down the creek with a rattlesnake's skin around his hat. It was the month the snakes were blind. She watched him through the window and in moving to do so, attracted her attention to her image in the mirror

above the desk. For a moment she looked at her eyes, which seemed a paler blue and a trifle distended, then sat down again.

That evening she was not going to cook Warner's supper, since the doctor would be obliged to stay near Mrs. McGowan. Each hour, he had given her enough morphine to kill all the rest of them, and she breathed on, making indistinct sounds when they moved her legs or tried in other ways to make her comfortable. Howard sat in the next room, trying not to listen to her sluggish respiration. James McGowan walked back and forth, his face and neck deep red and his forehead damp.

"For the love of Christ, end it, doc," he said.

As the air cooled, Edna relaxed into the state of drowsy comfort which came to her whenever she did not feel dizzy or a trifle sick. She knew she was pregnant and with the mystic certainty she felt about so many things, she was sure she was carrying Doctor Hewlett's child. She had not said a word of this to him or to any one. Sometimes, in the morning or on rainy days, she had to struggle against a mild apprehension, a sense of possible confusion ahead, but these periods of depression alternated quickly with hours of elation in which she loved the whole world. She went about the ward more quietly and touched the foreheads of the men who suffered there. The fact that her husband had

gotten used to having her around and no longer seemed moved by her touch made her grateful to him. Such a condition was natural for men, she believed. When his passions were aroused, usually during a reconciliation, she responded impulsively, as if he were a child.

Still, as the time approached when she must tell him of her condition, Edna could not put aside a rising inclination to let him know the truth. She was afraid to tell the doctor, for fear it would drive him away. Not once had she considered troubling him with parentage, in fact, she wanted the baby for herself, to keep after Doctor Hewlett had gone. If she told her husband, he might make a scene which would do the doctor harm. But Warner's jealousy had subsided almost at the same time she had fallen so deeply in love. It had made her seem more settled. At twilight, every day, she occupied herself with her doubt, only half her thoughts engaged. The deception of her husband about her own actions never had troubled her, for she had done as nature impelled her. But to let Warner think a child was his when she knew that was not the case would make her always uneasy. Every one remarked how well she looked, that she was gaining weight. She said that work agreed with her.

Before the night shift quit for the nine o'clock meal, Otis passed by, on his way from the office to

his cottage. Since the river had subsided, he had been obliged to work late each day, catching up with his correspondence and consulting with the draftsmen and assistants on the design of the gates, the pressure gauges and the lifting devices. The high water mark had been reached on the afternoon he had loaded down the cofferdam with a trainload of rock. While they were eating, the water had dropped an inch, during the night following, two inches. Two days later, work had been resumed in the hole and all danger from floods was over.

"You ought to take a rest," his wife kept saying, but he had found it difficult to do so. Having been accustomed to the tension of rising waters and deepening excavation, he had found himself restless whenever he tried to sit still. The fact that he felt it his duty to converse about other things at table made it hard for him to say anything, and Emily seldom took the initiative. It was not her way. She liked to respond, to develop a conversation suggested by others. The men she had known talked very little about their work, except to regret that at times it called them away from their diverse amusements. Actually she had considered this a weakness, an attitude unworthy of life's responsibilities. She had admired Otis particularly because he had seemed to be doing something significant and picturesque. Her regard for him had been in-

creased as she had come to realize the hazards of his profession and to appreciate the balance and clarity of his thought. Yet, at table, she found it difficult to talk to him. In the evenings, although she tried not to admit their inadequacy, there often seemed little to do except go to bed, and when she went to bed too early she woke up at daylight and had to wait hours for breakfast. And at such times his heavy breathing made her want to scream. Every day, she assured herself these things were accidental and due to her own lack of adaptability. Again, she found herself inclined to defend the ways of a more firmly established society. She had not been able to make friends with a single woman in camp, not because she had held herself aloof, but due to the fact that they did not know precisely how to act with her. Her presence prompted them to put on airs which she had never thought of. With men like Doctor Hewlett or James McGowan, who was punctiliously courteous in the house as he was abrupt on the works, she was quite at ease, but they were always busy. She had tried the school teacher, who had been more embarrassed than the others, so uncomfortable that Emily did not have the heart to urge her to come again. Only the barber's wife was at all natural with her and showed her clippings describing her brother's bouts and victories. Once or twice they had walked to the

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divide together and looked over into the forest reserve, or up the trail in the canyon where the graves were ranged side by side on the slope. There were nine of them, now, the most recent being that of the Mormon musician.


And two or three evenings each week, Ned Sanger, after shaving and changing his shirt, would walk drearily down the road to the graveyard and stand until dusk at the boy's grave. For several days after the Mormon's death, Sanger did not touch his clarinet and when he finally took it from the case and began to play sad tunes, one of the other men said it gave him the willies. The old circus man seemed strangely changed. His feelings were more easily hurt and after that single remark he could not be induced to play again in the bunkhouse. On Sunday afternoon he would take his instrument down the canyon and play for hours between the hills. He let his hair grow long and his face muscles sagged. His trips to the graveyard started men to making fun of him and stories began to circulate about Ned and the Mormon, his companions in the bunkhouse began to remember things they had seen in a different light and to joke about them. The stable boss, after Ned had been drunk in plain sight of the office twice in one week, refused to sell him liquor.

"You'd better get on to yourself," he said.



Summer afternoons, except in the immediate vicinity of the works, were steadily and stiflingly hot and the stream trickled harmlessly down the canyon, its tributary creeks dry and its springtime roar forgotten. The white men who had farms in adjacent states hiked down the road, with the friends they had made at Lava Rock, and spread out for the harvest, where wages ran as high as ten dollars a day. This time there was no need to replace them, since the work was concentrated around the concrete plant. The mixers rumbled, methodically awkward, the gravel sifted through the screens and cement dust tinged the slope of the oval hill above the tunnel. Like huge land crabs, the distributors moved their angular claws from corner to corner, dribbling concrete into the forms. The forms were twenty feet above bed rock, and the ponderous base of the structure, set firmly into the ledge, already tapered slightly, the upstream and downstream planes converging in a calculated curve.

After mess, each morning and at noon, the Austrians could be seen trailing up the spillway hill where Jake Thompson met them, and in the gully where the graves were side by side, a large dugout had been made, covered thickly with turf and was being filled with hundreds of cans of black powder and stacks of dynamite in cases. The sound of the



drills on the high northern hill scarcely reached the camp. Jake became more laconic, and at home more mysterious. After work one evening, he crossed the lower cofferdam and examined the face of the granite and lava ledge just opposite the spillway. Otis saw him and asked him what he was about. The rock man said he would like, on his own time, to make a little niche in the face of the ledge from which he would watch when the big blast tore off the side of the spillway slope and sent it crashing to the river.

"I should like to see such a thing," he said.

At once Otis felt he should like to see it, too, and told Thompson to put a couple of men on the job the next day. The foreman thanked him. On his way up the creek, he met Joselyn coming down. The timekeeper had had supper at the sawmill camp.

"You've got company, Jake," he said. "You better hurry."

When Jake reached the doorway of his shack he saw his boy, a half head taller, sitting at the table and Mrs. Thompson holding her hands in her apron anxiously. The foreman grunted, then hung up his hat as if nothing had happened, turning his back on his son. Mrs. Thompson took a half step, then stood still again, watching her husband fill his pipe deliberately and do the same things he always

did. The boy slumped sullenly in his chair, pretending to read the paper, upside down.

"So you're back, are you? Where've you been?"

"Twin Falls," the boy said, curtly.

"They're not taking on any men, now," his father said.

"I'm in no hurry to work," said the boy, and tossed a roll of bills to the table.

"See that, now," said his mother.

"Keep it," said Jake. "And see you pay your board." And he started to get ready for bed. The next morning Jake put his son to work on the little niche across the river.

"Do you think you can swing a hammer?" he asked. "Or have you got too used to forkin' hoss-turd?"

"I ain't a pencil stiff, at any rate," the boy retorted.

The stage came in a half hour late, having been held up on a narrow stretch of road by a string of freighters hauling powder. The driver slung off the mailbag at the postoffice and as Warner Nichol passed on his way to the cableway, the postmaster hailed him.

"Didn't know you had friends abroad," he said, looking at the strange stamp and postmark.

Nichol was puzzled, then recognized Eldridge's handwriting. On the way up the hill, he

tore the letter open and read it, shading it with one hand to keep off the glare of the sunshine.

"The boss is in Nicaragua," he told the other cableway man. "He's sold four number sixes to an English outfit." All afternoon he had to watch himself to keep from missing the signals. As the carriage ran forward and back, always the same, his nerves grew ragged and in mid-afternoon he called another hoist man and turned the levers over to him.

"I'm going to lay off," he said, "before I kill somebody."

On the way down the hill, he read the letter again, and in his shack, alone, he kept it open on the table before him.

Across the river, Edna was finishing her afternoon's work in the ward, followed by Stepan Riml, whose mind was clearing gradually. He had stopped acting queerly, went down to the cookshack for meals and did the sweeping and carrying when Old Nick was busy with the flowers. The doctor had sent East for a German-English dictionary and had helped the Tyrolian find the names for the articles in the room, the earth, the sky and the nurse. There were few other patients, and none of them troublesome, so before the heat had reached its height Edna sat down by the desk in the office and recounted her thoughts she could never quite fit to-

gether. Her back ached slightly and she was surprised to find how weak her legs were.

All that day she had been tremulous, her eyes filling with tears for no reason, her desires shooting off on odd little tangents which she realized were unreasonable yet she could not check them. A mild depression had weighed upon her, always more insistently, and when she had gone to the McGowan cottage to help the doctor there the smell of the sickroom had made her ill. As the air cooled, she returned to her usual perplexity. She imagined she felt the child in her womb and wished, above all, to protect it. At times, she resolved to tell her husband everything, hoping he would beat her across the face and shoulders. Her resolve brought her erect, and then the weakness of her legs caused her to sit down and reflect again. She could not ruin Doctor Hewlett, and yet she knew she must clear her conscience. She wanted to talk to the baby, in its earliest infancy, to tell him what a man his father had been. She never thought of the child as a girl. There was no way of concealing it much longer. That was certain.

Evening came, and she was left alone with her impulses. She knew she must tell some one that night. When the doctor returned, exhausted, she was unable to utter a word. He helped her untangle her white cap from a hairpin and sent her down

the hill. She crossed the bridge and entered the shack, rehearsing what she should say. The place was empty. She began to cry, starting for the bunk-house where she supposed Warner was playing cards, then returned before she had gotten half way to the bridge. The air made her shiver, her teeth chattered. She bit her tongue, in an effort not to scream. And then she grew calm again and waited. At midnight, her husband was still away. Then she noticed the box had been moved beneath the bed and his best clothes were gone. She began to laugh, and to hope and then to shiver again.

In Boise, Warner Nichol was talking with Gimp Farley, leaning across the bar.

"What time does No. 3 pull out for 'Frisco?" he asked.

## X

ONE afternoon in September when Otis reached the cottage, he found Emily standing in the open door, radiant and excited. Her brother was to visit them. As she read the letter and talked of plans for rearranging the household, her brown eyes lighted and Otis, half listening to what she was saying, remembered how long they had been dull and heavy. Except for her eyes, her coloring was neutral, so that they reflected, more strikingly than is usual, the state of her mind and body. Otis was



as glad as she, so glad that he found it difficult to express himself convincingly. Now that the work was proceeding so smoothly, necessitating for the time being only the constant repetition of the same processes of mixing and dumping concrete and shifting forms, he had found time to worry about his wife. She was devoted, her sense of duty was delicate and insistent, she appreciated the savage natural beauty, the riotous shrubs in the garden, the harnessed violence in the hole, the essential calmness of his character. But when he came face to face with the issue, he knew she was not happy. And he also realized that he would not be at all content if his job did not usurp his best faculties. Her sufferings during the first winter had shocked him. The strain of the previous winter and the perilous spring told upon him in retrospect. The shortening of the days again had made him anxious for the months ahead.

Emily, knowing her brother's easy habits and need for society, had never thought of inviting him to come to Lava Rock. She had quite definitely kept from him, in her letters, the difficulties she had been trying to overcome. But the autumn before, when Old Nick had brought them venison, she had written about the forest reserve, stretching for miles beyond the divide, the gophers in the rock piles, the coyotes in the hills, and Frank Townsend,

who hunted a month each fall in Maine, had grown progressively more enthusiastic.

The back porch was boarded and screened by Abe Johnson, a set of springs and a mattress were brought from Boise on top of the stage coach, and Emily rode down the canyon with the stage driver to meet No. 6 from the East. Otis had offered to send down a rig, but Emily wanted her brother to have a chance to rough it.

The meeting on the station platform had a touch of abandon which the brother and sister had seldom shown to one another before. He had been lonely since she had left the house, and she felt all at once that the unrelated worlds in each of which she had a fragmentary part were joined. In the morning, they sat side by side in the stage, the canvas thrown back, and the driver, a trifle drunk, slewed them around the bend at the mouth of the canyon, so that Frank saw the river nearly a quarter of a mile below. Emily, when they were safely on the road again, told him of the man who had lost his life his first day on the job. The strange coloring of the lava, the mist of the badlands beyond, the ruins of the placer mines, the smell of the sage and the dust, kept them silent for miles at a stretch. At the office, Frank shook hands with Otis and helped unload his luggage. He had brought two high-powered rifles and a shotgun.

Everything in the camp seemed well ordered, to him—the bunkhouses ranged upon the hills in rows, the tarboard roofs spread beneath him on the flat, the long span of the cableways, the flowerbeds around the cottages. Conversation never lagged at mealtime, and Frank kept it always within a common range. He talked easily, and listened with eagerness. Within an hour, he had made a friend of Nick. He and the doctor sang duets and coaxed Howard McGowan to accompany them on the old movable organ the Bulgarians had left behind. He met the children up the creek, had tea with Mrs. Walkenheusen, told Mary McKinnon of the fight her brother had won in New York, where he had had a ringside seat, and even thought of going to work for a week or two, with Howard, just to see what it was like. The first evening they walked to the spillway hill, Frank spoke to the Austrian leader in German, and the Bohunks gathered around, forgetting their drills for a moment, amazed at hearing their own tongue from a friend of the big boss.

Otis's admiration for his brother-in-law increased and the latter grasped quickly the essentials of the engineering problems and said it was a shame the people in the East had so remote a conception of what was being done in the country. He planned to write a magazine article, but this, like his im-

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pulse to go to work, he let drop, once having convinced himself it would be a good thing. The lights burned until after midnight each evening in the Otis cottage and the sharpness of the air made it harder to get up in the mornings. Emily slept soundly, and her appetite came back.

Now and then, James McGowan would join them at dinner, but since his wife had died, he lived a solitary life, making a pretense at keeping house and avoiding talking whenever it was possible. He kept the job moving more relentlessly than before and never mentioned his loss. Howard worked with Buchanan on the forms, helped dry the dishes and make the beds, and sat reading long hours each night. Often Frank Townsend got him to go for a walk. The Philadelphian was tall and lean, as Howard was, but he moved his hands and elbows as he talked and his eyes moved quickly from point to point along the hills. Once in a while, Frank would get the superintendent into conversation and keep him up late enough so that McGowan slept until morning. Before long, however, James McGowan interrupted his son who was absorbed in Swift and told him peremptorily the camp was no place for him.

"You're a chemist," he said. "Go back East and get to work. I can take care of myself."


The boy knew, in spite of his efforts, that his

presence made the situation worse. With little protest, he packed his trunk and left within a week. The cottage gradually assumed that slight degree of untidiness which men can seldom transcend, and the superintendent's hair showed more definitely gray.

Where the hole had been lay a great rectangular area of concrete, with huge boulders like plums, four feet apart, and the masonry was almost up to the level of the river bed. All the pumps but two were dismantled and shipped away. The foundation was one hundred yards square at the bottom and the downstream face, now ninety feet high, curved smoothly across the canyon, almost vertical. The upstream face converged toward the front, like the inside of a mold. And Otis had urged the mayor and city council of Boise to come and see the structure, explaining to them that in case of an earthquake, the hills would break before the dam collapsed. Gimp Farley had come with the inspecting party and at noon Doctor Hewlett had taken him the rounds of the messhouse and the bunkhouses, so that he might pass out his campaign cards for sheriff.

"What do you hear from your husband?" Gimp had asked Edna Nichol. "He sure knew how to handle himself."

"Oh, he's all right," she answered. But every



one in camp knew he had left her. The barkeeper tried to look anywhere except at her abdomen, which protruded beneath her apron.

When Edna had told the doctor she was to have a child he had shown alarm at first, beneath his habitual facial control, but as she continued without the sign of implicating him, he laughed and was quite happy. From that time on, he treated her with impersonal tenderness and she, more and more absorbed in the thoughts of her infant and relieved that her husband by leaving her had solved her most trying problem, fell naturally into the complementary attitude. In the hospital office, she worked making baby clothes and only regretted that her condition made her acquaintances in camp speak slightly of the absent rigger.

The night Edna had found her shack empty, Mary McKinnon, next door, had heard her crying and had come to her.

"Shall I tell Mr. Otis?" Mary had asked. "He'll head him off before it's too late."

"Oh, no," protested Edna. "Please don't do that." Somehow she made the other woman understand that her tears were from nervousness and not from regret or fear. "Warner is a good man," she repeated, whenever his name was mentioned. "He's a rigger, not an engineer. He isn't used to steady work." The other cableway engineer, to whom



Nichol had said that Eldridge was in Nicaragua, out of loyalty to his friend, said nothing about it and while the postmaster remembered the foreign stamp, he had not the remotest idea to which country it belonged.

Joselyn had kept out of it all. As the dam approached the waterline, forms were set so that a passageway would be left through the interior of the structure, near the upstream face, perpendicular to the river. For some reason he could not explain, Joselyn liked to walk through the concrete passage, in which the air was neither warm nor cold and all sounds from the outside were shut off. Spaced at intervals, insulated wires protruded a foot from the wall, to be connected with the pressure gauges and thermometers. The timekeeper had been on the job since the beginning, and had known what every man was doing, but not until that moment when he first walked through the hidden corridor had he visualized the dam, complete, rising sheer across the canyon. He had not realized the vastness of its interior, nor the complexity of the network of wires and passages it would contain. Years ago, he had read of the pyramids and the catacombs, of swathed mummies of the Pharaohs and bleached bones of martyrs. He remembered the Sphinx and the Acropolis, the tower of Babel and Aladdin's cave. On each occasion when his work

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took him to the south bank, he entered the archway and walked the full length of the dam, with his flashlight, feeling as remote from the camp as in camp he felt remote from the world outside. It was a refinement of solitude. Then, sometimes, he thought of the shepherders gone mad amid the bleating of their flocks, of the old prospector who shook out his hair in the wind and shouted at the hills.

"I must get on to myself," he often said, and tried to convince himself he must go East again during the winter, perhaps to stay there. Then, as the season advanced, he knew he would not go East. The boredom of hotel lobbies and of solitary hours at the bar, of old acquaintances frowsy with domesticity and talking to him of their offices or their prospects of getting a raise, came back to him, and he became blackly depressed.

Seeing Edna knitting in the hospital office one evening, Joselyn stopped there and she chatted naturally with him until it was past his bedtime. This became almost a habit, and whenever the doctor came in, he greeted Joselyn cordially and did everything to make him feel at home. Edna slept in the hospital, having sold the Nichol shack to an electrician who had been living in a tent and was glad of more solid shelter. Stepan Riml had gone back to work and slept in his old bunkhouse.

All day, Edna sang or sewed. Her work was light, her surroundings congenial. Warner had taken only the money which happened to be in his pocket, so that all his savings, amounting to more than two thousand dollars, were in a Boise bank on a checking account they had held jointly. Her own salary was more than enough for her needs. While in the past she had dreamed restrainedly, now she let her fancy run, enjoyed the air as she breathed it and felt that the world was kind.

Through Gimp Farley, who talked of Doctor Hewlett's skill to the railroad men on the Short Line, the doctor's name had spread all over the West. The chief surgeon of the Santa Fé died and the directors, in looking for a successor, sent a letter offering Doctor Hewlett a large salary and almost any arrangements he might suggest. He said nothing to Edna about it, in fact he did not make up his mind at once. He was enjoying himself at Lava Rock, especially since Townsend had arrived, and he had never planned a career in detail. He drifted along easily, searching out his music from the bottom of his trunk, sending East for small presents for Edna's baby and dosing long lines of men who came to him with colds as the weather began to turn. Mrs. Buchanan, who had played the piano a little in her younger days, was drafted by Townsend and the doctor for an accompanist. They took

the portable organ Howard McGowan had left behind to the Buchanan cottage and two or three evenings a week they sang there. Ned Sanger, who had known Buchanan in the days when the latter was still in the bunkhouse above the store, joined them whenever the doctor went after him and stood by as he shaved and changed his shirt. The old circus man sat ill at ease except while he was playing. He transposed readily from vocal scores and played whichever parts of songs or operas needed filling in, reading with amazing skill and executing with curious mechanical precision. But he left his chewing tobacco behind, and missed it.

Luke Buchanan sat in the corner, listening and trying to cloak with his Southern manners the jealousy he felt because his wife was making every possible advance to Townsend. At first, she had fixed her attention upon Ingham who had ceased to visit them out of consideration for Luke. Townsend was utterly unaware of the real situation. He responded gallantly to Mrs. Buchanan's remarks, sat beside her at the table, helped her on with her wraps, and sometimes walked with her to see the works after the music had been put away.

In order that Otis and Emily might not be left alone too much, Doctor Hewlett arranged to have the Buchanans and the clarinetist come to their house occasionally, but there the circus man was

even more uncomfortable and while Otis tried to make Luke feel at home, he realized always that he did not quite succeed in doing so. Buchanan would try to control himself until he was alone with his wife. Then, in spite of the resolve he had clung to all evening, he would burst out with some recriminating remark to which she would retort. They quarreled so late into the night that she ceased getting up to prepare his breakfast, and slept until mid-morning, so that when supper time came, she was fresh and eager for excitement while he was exhausted and sullen.

At times when Luke was away, she felt sorry for him and blamed herself for torturing him. In such moods she resolved to promise, the next time he urged her, that she would not hold to the terms of their bargain and would remain faithful to him, as she had done thus far. But some queer perverseness kept her from yielding the single point which gave her complete control of the situation. Once he had lost his temper completely and had struck her across the face. She said nothing, but refused the next day to cover the slight bruise with powder. As he worked, he saw her walking around the camp and believed every one knew what he had done.

"You haven't been fighting?" Edna Nichol asked her.

"No, I hit my cheek against the closet door,"

Mrs. Buchanan said. "I'd like to see a man raise his hand to me." For the first time in months, Edna thought of Joe.

The telephone rang. Gimp Farley asked for the doctor and told him that Ned Sanger had been drunk on his hands for three days and had tried to kill a man who had called him a fairy.

"Load him on the stage," the doctor said, so the old circus man was brought back to camp again, snoring in the corner of the lurching stagecoach while the engineer who was on his way to consult with Otis about the gates rode up with the driver. Just before they reached camp, the driver stopped, handed the lines to the engineer who hardly knew what to do with them, and set Ned carefully by the roadside, shaking him and telling him to brace up. It was near the gulch where the graves had been dug and seeing the graveyard in his first conscious moment, Sanger was overcome with grief and threw himself upon the ground which covered the remains of the Mormon trumpet player, crying and slobbering.

The first set of gates were to be placed about fifty feet above the water line, and the concrete would reach that level before spring. The work, which was being speeded up as much as possible before the frost, was now all above ground and two major groups swarmed the spillway hill and



the riverbed each day. The graveyard shift was discontinued, except for a few watchmen to keep fires going, the pump man, and the repair work at the blacksmith shop. The blacksmith who played the double-B bass had left for Texas and had sold his instrument to the barber, who had no use for it but thought he might have some day.

Each evening, the poker game in the bunk-house went on, and it was taken for granted that the barber would win. He never won heavily, nor bet more than his hand was worth. He was genial, in a professional sort of way, and the men liked him well enough. He loaned money to those who lost, but on the following pay day he was sure to be in sight somewhere when his debtors received their money. It was the same in his shop. He did not refuse credit, but he found a way to remind a customer of a trifling amount he was due.

"There's no other way to run a business," he said.

He did not drink because it would make his hand unsteady, nor smoke because of his breath. Mornings, until ten o'clock or later, he remained at home, so that his wife saw as much of him as other wives see their husbands, although at a different time of day. She did not mind spending the evenings alone, for a little settlement had sprung up at their end of the bridge and several of the women

called in to see her frequently. Juanita Hamilton, the postmaster's daughter, got the habit of spending several hours daily with Mary who, for want of anything better to do, tried to teach her physical culture.

At the hospital, Juanita was met invariably by Edna Nichol who told her curtly that the doctor was busy or was out. Edna, who liked almost everybody, had grown violently jealous of the Hamilton girl and even when the latter got a chance to see Doctor Hewlett on the pretext of some minor ailment, Edna tried to find reason for entering the room to interrupt them. Soon, however, Juanita forgot the doctor in her infatuation for the barber's wife. She performed her exercises faithfully, shed her adolescent awkwardness and pallor, and when she found the older woman did not like to have her put her arms around her, admired Mary from a respectful distance and grew so beautiful that the doctor spent half the time dancing with her on Thanksgiving evening.

## XI


THE gang had been thinned down to six hundred men again, and the double ranks of bunkhouses north of the road were only two-thirds occupied. On cold evenings, the stoves glowed red hot and

water steamed in pails on top. The steady carpenters and helpers bought winter underwear at the commissary and the rubber boots were stacked in the warehouse.

One of the Spanish riggers received a letter from Nicaragua and half of the crew started southward, since there was little work left for them at Lava Rock. The Greeks were fired and tramped down the road, with five months' wages in their socks, headed for Pocatello. Twenty teams of horses were sold and driven by their owner down the canyon.


The face of the dam curved out from the foot of the spillway hill and buried itself in the face of the lava cliff on the south bank, a barrier thirty feet high, with a smooth cement face in mild tones of green-gray and lavender, the top edge jagged and cluttered with forms. The cofferdams had been neglected since the work had reached the river level. Otis's principal worry, now, was to keep the concrete from freezing before it set. He had considered laying off during the cold spells, but the upkeep of the idle camp would cost more than the precautions he could take to circumvent the frost. So the mixers were fed with hot water, the forms covered with hay, and Otis watched carefully each day's work, if the thermometer went below freezing point.

Then rain came, and settled down to a con-




stant drizzle. Men laid off, got drunk and sobered up again, but each morning they heard the drumming of rain upon the tarboard roof and changed their minds two or three times before they decided to get up for breakfast. Small blasts from the spillway barked through the hills.

The first few days of rain did not bother Frank Townsend. He had hunted so much and game was so plentiful that the sport had begun to bore him slightly. There was a certainty about it which made it less attractive, for he was sure not to come back empty-handed and the actual killing of deer and elk was the least pleasant feature of the adventure. The grouse had never been shot at, so that he could pick them out of the trees one by one with a rifle if he chose to do so. He read all the books Emily had, but his taste ran to old volumes of letters from a more gracious age and there were none to be had. The doctor's library was made up of books he cared for not at all—either they were sentimental, erotic, or too precious. Nick brought him everything that was left lying around the bunkhouse, always hoping one of the volumes would suit him. Then, one day, Nick tossed in the Sears Roebuck catalogue and Townsend spent many hours looking at the pictures and reading odd descriptions of articles which might be obtained by mail. The thought of writing East to a bookseller, then waiting weeks for a reply,



discouraged him. Wind howled outside and at first its weird noises fascinated him, then slowly it began to get on his nerves. He tried to walk, but the mud was inches deep. He went to the office and questioned the draftsman about the blueprints, but his quick sense of propriety told him he was in the way there. It was difficult to sleep late in the morning, since Otis got started away before eight o'clock. The doctor had taken such a fancy to Juanita Hamilton's dancing that he arranged many impromptu parties in which the postmaster's daughter was included and Townsend saw less of him. The musical evenings, at the time when they would have been most enjoyable, began to peter out, for suddenly it became clear to the Philadelphian that Mrs. Buchanan's flirtation was troubling Luke Buchanan and at once Townsend grew uneasy, held himself aloof from her and acted with such cordiality toward Buchanan that the situation was hardly less strained. Frank remembered many things that had passed and to which he had been oblivious at the time and his bachelor's fear of becoming involved, even slightly, kept him away. During long hours in which he had nothing to do but to keep dry and warm, difficult even in the house, he pondered, as he had done many times before, upon his own obtuseness. It seemed to him, then, as if all his life he had been equally awkward, catching social nuances which were of no



importance, missing until too late the point of significant affairs. He had read his sister's letters, the undertones of which might have conveyed the dreariness of the cold and rainy seasons, without appreciating the fact that she was, in a sense, utterly alone at Lava Rock. He knew that the friends he had made, except for the doctor, could not possibly be congenial with her. Although Otis was less occupied with his work than he had been since the project began, Frank saw clearly that his interests converged toward the structure which was rising foot by foot across the canyon. And Townsend's own inability to achieve such concentration troubled him. The story of the deserted canyon, invaded and blocked, of the river turned through a mountain, intrigued him, but he could not relish standing upon the cofferdam and watching colored mud run down a chute for hours at a time. He disliked the thought of cement splashing upon his trousers, and accepted his distaste for such things as a weakness. While it rained, his self-examination revealed nothing but weaknesses. His life appeared purposeless, his energy shallow and misspent. At dinner, however, he got back his animation and talked with Emily and Otis until he noticed that the latter was sleepy. Then he retired to the porch, where the rain beat most noisily upon the roof-boards.



The doctor, reading in his cot at the hospital, felt his eyes getting tired, and put his book aside. The weather depressed him very little, for the coming of winter always brought pneumonia, the uncertain light caused men to miss drills with their hammers, the rain made the ladders treacherous. He disliked to treat pneumonia, but surgical work always stimulated him. His eyes glistened, he ordered Nick and Edna about with the utmost calmness, and took pride in the fact that his incisions developed no infection and his stitches did not show. But he was uneasy because of Juanita Hamilton. He knew that she was taking his attentions far too earnestly and that trouble lay ahead. He realized also that his actions were upsetting Edna Nichol, whose condition made her tremulous and tearful.

Old Nick rapped on the door. He was in his jumper and hip rubber boots, and breathed hard.

"Get your clothes on," he said gruffly. "And come with me."

"What's up?" asked the doctor.

"You'll see fast enough."

The doctor dressed hurriedly and followed Nick out the door and down the muddy road. Just behind the bunkhouse across from the store Nick turned to the left and took the narrow pathway up the hill to the back-house, swinging his lantern. He opened the door slowly and from a rafter dangled

the body of Ned Sanger, a rope around his neck. Doctor Hewlett make a quick move towards it, but Nick spoke up:

"No use. He's dead all right." And he poked the stomach of the old circus musician with his thumb. "I'll get a couple of men to take him down."

The doctor stood watching them, sent a man to the warehouse for one of the rough wooden boxes kept in a corner there, and had the body brought to the operating room, where the box was covered with a sheet on the floor. As he started to get back into his cot, the doctor thought of Edna, sleeping in a room nearby, and to save her the shock of coming suddenly upon the corpse in the morning tapped softly upon her door.

"Who is it?" she asked, and he entered. For a long time he sat on the edge of her bed, holding her hand and smoothing her forehead, and advising her gently not to go into the operating room. She was not afraid, and soothed by his touch and his voice, went peacefully to sleep in his arms.

Townsend, in the morning, getting into his damp clothes, realized that soon he would be going back East. He said nothing to Emily about it, because in order to get started, he knew he should have to wait until some external reason for his departure developed. Thereafter he was more restless, but less downcast. The prospects of a change were

ahead of him. In his early enthusiasm for the camp and the forest up the creek, he had declared he should stay until spring and Otis had counted upon it. Otis spent most of his time with the designer of the gates. Where the dam cut into the granite and lava ledge nearest the tunnel, three rooms with concrete back and sides and windows on the front had been built in. Another passage was to be left, below the level of the first set of gates, so that no leakage, change of pressure or of temperature within the dam should go undetected. The designer sometimes dined at the Otis cottage, but when he did the conversation was almost always too technical for Emily or Frank to follow. The visitor did not smoke, nor care for music. He never hunted and always shaved himself.

On such occasions, Townsend's mind got to wandering and once it occurred to him that some of his friends in Philadelphia had spoken of a central filter to purify the water supply. The matter had been discussed, he remembered, in the newspapers. The city health authorities wanted it, the mayor did not. Frank decided he would try to get an offer for his brother-in-law to bring Emily back home without injuring in any sense her husband's career. He was elated, and most secretive about it. And when he told Emily he must go East, he let her understand that something was afoot which

would be best for all of them. As he crossed to the office to tell Otis, he had to step aside while three freighters passed with loads of black powder. They were hauling explosives from the cache in the gulch to a point on the creek road nearest the spillway. Otis was on his way up to the north hill, so Frank walked along with him and before he had a chance to say what was on his mind, Otis began explaining the big blast.

Jake Thompson's men were unloading the wagons at the roadway and tramping slowly, single file, with powder kegs upon their shoulders. Otis followed them up the slope, and at a point fifty yards from the downstream cableway platform, he entered a dugout by means of a ladder. Two electric wires, heavily insulated, were twisted around the upright of the ladder and at the foot was a narrow sort of corridor, cut into the hidden ledge of granite. The foreman was opening a coil of wire. At intervals, square shafts had been sunk into the heart of the hill and as they stood there, Jake started down to the lower level with a case of dynamite on his shoulder. He was chuckling to himself and shaking his head. The Austrians' eyes gleamed in the artificial light and they spoke excitedly with one another.

As little as he understood what was going on, Townsend was aware of the tension and his mixed

sensations of being high in the air and far underground at the same time made him long to get to the surface and into the daylight again. One of the Bohunks let down a powder can with more of a jolt than he had intended, and laughed as he saw the visitor wince. Otis talked a while with the foreman, then led the way out.

Halfway down the hill, a lateral pathway took off from the main trail which the cableway engineers had worn through the sage brush. The two men followed it and reached another and larger shaft.

"Don't say a word to Emily," Otis said. "It would make her nervous."

Townsend admitted that it made him nervous, too. He had been less so at Vesuvius.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Loading up for the big blast," Otis replied. "This has all got to go." And he motioned with his hand to indicate a slice which took off half the mountain. "The bottom shot will lift it, and the top one split it and send it down the slope. They're timed a half second apart."

For three days the rock gang lugged powder and dynamite across the paths and disappeared into the holes. The explosives were placed, tamped and covered. Electric wires made a network through the interior of the hill, which still was covered by

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its layer of earth, topped with brush and sparse wet grass. From below little activity was visible. Jake Thompson could hardly sleep. Two hours before the whistle blew, he would walk down the road, stop in at the cookshack or the stable, and roam about anxiously until it was time to start work. He had urged McGowan to take off the night gang, so that he might see where every pound of powder went and could test all the contacts himself. But from the beginning he had planned to let the electrician pull the lever. The small tunnel into the opposite cliff faced the spillway at an angle, so that no rocks could be hurled directly into it. Thompson wanted to see the hill go up.

"Are you sure about the cableways?" Otis asked Thompson.

"It'll go the other way," the foreman said.

In the morning, McGowan cleared out the hole. The pumps were stopped, the concrete men herded to the south bank and far down toward the bridge, the cofferdams deserted. Men sat around the store and the warehouse, while the foremen kept others from passing the deadline at the postoffice. Everything was strangely silent. The mixers had ceased to turn, the steam shovel had dragged itself clumsily upstream by its own snout, the rain had let up for an hour or two and the overcast sky pressed almost upon the hilltops.




James McGowan, the postmaster, Frank Townsend and Doctor Hewlett stood upon the platform in front of the postoffice.

First they saw Jake Thompson and Otis climb the south cliff to the small tunnel and disappear within. Then high on the hill the electrician made his way along the path. They saw him stoop as he connected the wires with the small apparatus which would send the quick current to a hundred vital points within the hill. He stood up again.

At the entrance of the niche in the lava rock, the faces of Otis and Thompson showed dimly. Both were trembling, saying not a word, hunched together in the narrow mouth of their shelter. A half minute passed, and Otis saw a hawk wheeling slowly out above the hill, poised on his outspread wings, creeping across the sky as if marking the retarded passage of time.

And then the earth was shaken with a dull concussion, a double shock and muffled noise. Ever so slowly, a horizontal rift widened on the face of the spillway hill, showing white lightning within, and more suddenly a downward zigzag split the rising mass obliquely.

Blue light shimmered, shot with violet and indigo. Areas of sage brush floated intact an instant in the air, then sank like great gray parachutes, and beneath them, in steady streams, sand, dust and



rocks slid away, and everything crumpled. Boulders, tons and tons, showed dimly their moving shapes as smoke enveloped them and the rumbling of the avalanche down the canyon-side rose to a roar. It was incredibly graceful and deliberate. Masses of earth and rock collapsed and rolled to the mountain's feet. Spiral volumes of black smoke burst like opals, with winking dull red eyes and silver serpents. The stillness between the hills was filled with sibilant sound and black clouds swirling and eddying upward.

Then the smoke and whirling dust covered all, the shattered slope which stood no more, the neighboring hills on either side. The damp air held the smoke clouds together and let them drift, until faint light showed between them and the jagged cross-section of the spillway hill came gradually into sight.

The tower of the downstream cableway stood erect in a sea of gray, a mirage which still persisted. The north end of the lower cofferdam was buried in tons of débris. The smell of powder drifted to the camp and up the creek, and one by one the men started back toward the dam, the mixers began turning, and the Austrians scrambled back up the hill, starting a new pathway, to make sure all the blasts had exploded.

Jake Thompson came from his tunnel, scratch-

ing his head. What he had waited months to see had passed. He could remember jumbled fragments, colored lights and zigzags, and holding his breath as the hill arose and started to slide, but his throat was dry and he could find nothing to say about it. He mumbled good-by to Otis, then dazedly he wandered up where his gang was waiting, following the Bohunks' footprints. At noon, when the work below was moving as usual, he told Joselyn he was going to lay off and take a trip to town. He could get as drunk as a goat, his wife told him, but if he went near the women she would find it out.

## XII

BECAUSE in his clinical experience in Milwaukee, Doctor Hewlett had seen so many women malformed and twisted out of shape, he could not help but admire Edna Nichol's body as he propped her up in her agony to help deliver the child. Her thighs were broad and white, smooth muscles flexed upon her abdomen and when, as she tore at a towel and blood flowed from her lips where she had bitten them, Joselyn turned faint and rushed for the doorway, the doctor realized that Edna was screaming—short, piercing shrieks rising higher as the head forced its way through her tenderest parts.

The doctor reached for his forceps, then hesi-

tated, and in one last convulsion the baby was born. Edna fainted. The child was a boy.

The birth had been a trifle hard because of Edna's age. When she awoke, she was weak and tired, but otherwise unharmed. With all the skill he had developed in his leisure hours and with great tenderness, Doctor Hewlett repaired her torn flesh and strained muscles. It was one of his last acts at Lava Rock.

Somehow the decision of Frank Townsend to go back East made the doctor restless, too, and another and more flattering offer came from the Santa Fé. As much as he had enjoyed the life of the camp, he longed for the city again, the draperies in comfortable rooms, women in opera cloaks, the concerts. All this seemed distant and almost unreal, and he believed that he should appreciate what the cities offered, after having been deprived of their benefits so long. He accorded a picturesqueness and a dignity to civilization which was comparable to that of the hills, the old volcanoes or the forest.

He had told Edna with some hesitation, but she had only burst into tears and begged him to stay until her confinement was over. At once he had consented, and had written the Santa Fé officials to that effect. He made a final round of calls, had a final dinner with the Otises, packed up his clothes and his souvenirs with the aid of Old Nick, shook

hands with everybody and rode down the canyon on the high seat beside the stage driver.

Edna cried all that afternoon, and then felt a certain relief, for her child was in her arms and all possibility of her having to share it had passed away. As he rode on the train toward San Francisco, in the midst of a jumble of thoughts a sudden clear recollection startled Doctor Hewlett with the fact that the baby's eyes seemed so very familiar to him. It was a matter on which he did not care to dwell, and with the many new sights and the activities into which he was suddenly projected the image grew less precise each time it recurred.

The spillway hill was trimmed to its final shape, another battery of mixers set up, and another concrete gang set to work on the higher level, toward which the dam was rising in stages. Jake Thompson's Austrians had worked on rock the whole length of the canyon road, had blasted it from the tunnel, hoisted it from the big hole, tore it from the spillway. Now they were given hip boots and they splashed around the concrete, but they mounted the hill less eagerly and ate their meals with little relish. Some of them started going to the mess house without washing the cement from their faces and the mud from their hair. The leader had a hard time keeping up his spirits. He began writing letters, laboriously, in the evening and

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watching the mail for replies. Once he spoke of quitting and McGowan raised his pay.

"You stay where you are, Joe," the superintendent said. "There's no work outside in the winter."

But Joe wanted more rock work and with hills of granite all around, in his bewilderment regarding the general plan, he did not quite understand why his gang, who all drew \$2.75 or more, had to act as muckers instead of blowing up another mountain. Still, he kept them in line because he liked Thompson, Joselyn and McGowan, and there was nothing else to do.


Three oval openings, spaced equally and fifty feet above the old river bed, marked the curved face of the dam, and into these the lower set of gates were being set. The heavy parts were dragged over the road by six-horse teams, assembled on the lower cofferdam and lifted to place by the cableways. As during the previous winter the work had been concentrated far below the ground, now it was high in the air. Carpenters stood on a staging suspended from above as they hammered the forms into place.

The weather was fitful, and some days the sleet, driven down the canyon by a steady wind, made outdoor work impossible. The stable boss, having only a dozen teams to feed, played solitaire on



a horse blanket and tacked up pictures cut from magazines on the walls of his room. His stove was always red, and frequently men came there for whiskey. Wilson had saved enough money to buy half interest in a livery stable next to Farley's saloon and intended, when the dam was finished, to set up in Boise and hire out hacks to go to the Barberton road house.

The new doctor did not get started off very well with the men, Old Nick disliked to work for him, and on the one occasion when Emily invited him to dinner he was so frankly displeased with the camp and the God-forsaken country round about that Otis was offended. A warm spell brought out a case of smallpox and the pest house had to be re-opened. Once Emily went to the hospital to see the baby. Edna kept him in her room and had named him John. As she worked around the ward, she would talk to him through the open door. He was large for his age, strong and quick to react to sights or sound. The faint odor in the room at first was unpleasant to Emily. She tried to touch the baby's hand, then hurried away and when the wind started blowing again around the cottage and the seed pods rattled on the porch, she stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth or walked the floor with her cold hands clenched tightly. She could not stay alone and yet she dreaded the moment when her husband



should return, for they both maintained a pretense of cheerfulness which deceived neither of them. She had determined not to leave the camp, but a hatred for the view from her windows, the rumble of the works, the mud crunching upon the doorstep, was distilled within her. Her collarbones began to show, her hands looked thin. While she was eating, waiting for Otis to speak, she could see James McGowan standing by the stove, cooking his meal, his powerful head bent over the frying pan. She had stopped asking him to dine with them since the time he had said:

“I should be a death’s head at the feast.”


The days dragged through January. There was no more music, no parties, no engineering problems or seasonal crises. Because she was so restless at night, she suggested that Otis sleep upon the porch so that she would not disturb him. This he tried to do with grace, but was troubled by an undertone of resentment which frequently recurred. Food tasted flat, because neither of them got their accustomed amount of exercise.

It was so throughout the camp. Men’s tempers grew ragged, fights broke out, the drinking got so bad that McGowan was obliged to make a general clean out and had to fire some of his best men. When it rained hard, there was a certain relief, but for the most part the heavy air pressed sluggishly

upon the hills and rain drops clung to the twigs of the syringas. Even Old Nick got to drinking alcohol splits and ran amok in the hospital, chasing a Bohunk down the hill in his undershirt.

Otis grew taciturn and morose. It was hard to find enough work for the office men to do and the chief designer spent idle hours cleaning old tracings with a soft eraser and writing articles for the *Engineering News*.

Then a jubilant letter came from Townsend, addressed to Otis, with a postscript for Emily. He had found, upon returning to Philadelphia, that the filter project was going through and that the city authorities were looking for an engineer who had had no connection with politics. There were two rival candidates, resident Philadelphians, but each was so strong the other could not be chosen. By the pressure Townsend had been able to bring to bear from the residential section which had been almost ignored for years by the mayor and councilmen, all had agreed to compromise on Otis. In the same mail, the official confirmation came, offering Otis complete control of the undertaking, from an engineering point of view, a salary above his present income, and a binding contract covering a four-year period. As Emily read the letters, over his shoulder, she could feel the blood circulating through her veins and her eyes lighted up again. Frank's satisfaction



at having achieved such a complicated affair was evident in his eager sentences. It was for this that he had left Lava Rock ahead of his plans. Emily went back to her place at the table, and then was startled to see that Otis's face was gray and that he avoided looking at her. She could not believe it.

"Are you ill?" she asked, and rose again.

"No. I shall have to think it over."

At first, this did not alarm Emily because she had come to know that he never acted hastily, that in a matter which was quite clear to her, he often found elements which confused it for him. She let him go to the office, but all afternoon plans for their home passed through her mind. She enumerated the friends they must call on, the theaters they would attend. It surprised her that she had forgotten the names of one or two of the streets.

Otis sat in the office, unable to think clearly, then walked down to the damsite. There was no sign remaining of the big hole, the river was puny in spite of the rain, he found it hard to remember the original contours of the spillway hill. On both levels, concrete was being placed, the same way every hour and every day. The forms were nailed together, set up, filled, and after the masonry had hardened the forms were taken down again. The process was to be repeated until the structure

reached its full height and afforded a fifteen-foot roadway across the canyon.

The struggle he had had with the floods, the uncertainty of the tunnel, the hazardous and meticulous underground work, was past and buried. And yet he knew that if he had himself alone to consider he would not leave Lava Rock until he had seen the gates thrown open and three oval waterfalls shot through with the sun descend in graceful parabolas and spread into foam and rainbows at the river level. He had worked on a city water supply when first out of college and he remembered the lawsuits over right of way, the wrangling with judges and politicians, the workmen changing their clothes on the job and riding home in street cars, the laws forbidding overtime and Sunday labor and the complaints two old ladies had filed when a foreman had cursed a Polack beneath their windows.

He tried to weigh his distastes and responsibilities. Perhaps he had not explained sufficiently to Emily the function of an engineer. She had tried her best. And also he realized that gradually, all over the world, the deserted valleys were being invaded, the forests were being cleared, the deserts watered. Suburbs were spreading like stains upon the map, farms were being subdivided, ranches were fenced. Perhaps the engineering of the future was

to move in to the cities and blueprints were to be mingled with lawyers' briefs. He felt out of place, that his dreams had been sand, that he, who had prided himself upon his grasp of facts, had overlooked the essential ones. Yet he would not move hastily.

For once, he had a perverse impulse to act unreasonably, to say that no matter what was offered or what the consequences might be, he would see through the job until the end. The mild contempt he had acquired for social niceties through his middle-class surroundings as a boy, his long, steady grind at school, and his active life since, increased almost to bitterness. The wives of mayors would have to be flattered, and office boys would expect tips. He felt a definite hostility to Emily. He had never formulated such frankly critical thoughts of her. He had wanted passionate love. So had she, he thought, and yet he knew they were never likely to experience it. He was too reasonable, and she was passive. In trying to be considerate, he felt ridiculous. It was all mixed up.

His temper was stirred continually by the fact that she had asked to sleep alone. It was that which determined him to remain until the dam was finished. He returned to the cottage, finding her so happy that she did not notice at first his expression.

"I think I should stay here," he said.



When she realized what he was saying, she went to the bedroom and closed the door, and he heard her sobbing there, but kept himself stubbornly from entering.

### XIII

THE barber came down with smallpox and was sent to the pest house with three other patients. The new doctor had had difficulty in getting the men to be vaccinated and had told them it was their own lookout if they got the disease. Mrs. McKinnon kept to herself for ten or twelve days, afraid of spreading the contagion, but she could find no indications that she was not as healthy as ever and at last became convinced she was all right.

The yearly epidemic, because of the open winter, promised to be more severe than usual and Otis again suggested that Emily had better spend the winter in the East. He had written Townsend that he wished to complete the Lava Rock dam before considering his plans for the future. Emily, who had lost weight, had constant colds and had given way sometimes to fits of hysteria when left alone during windstorms, made no further objection. They parted without any discussion of their plans, because neither of them quite understood how far their misunderstandings had led them, and they did

not wish to risk a quarrel. Otis ate at the foreman's table in the mess house, and when the rain let up in the evening, walked back and forth on the roads around camp. The card game continued in the bunkhouse, the night shift worked steadily, with strings of lights a hundred feet in the air across the canyon where the dam had risen to the level of the second set of gates. Joselyn spent his spare hours at the hospital, talking with Edna and watching her care for the baby.

One evening Otis crossed the footbridge and found Mary McKinnon standing at the rail, looking down into the water. He stopped beside her and they talked a while and he felt strangely reluctant to leave her.


"It must be lonely for you, now your husband is sick," he said.

She did not answer at once and when she did, by her tone more than her words, she conveyed that she did not mind being alone for a while. She had been raised with a large family, the only girl. The house had been small and with few facilities for privacy, and so she had enjoyed her husband's habit of leaving her each evening and now that she had a place to herself, for the first time in her life, she could not help but consider it a sort of luxury. The barber was not suffering. Smallpox in that region was always light. She had sent him a pack of cards

and a game was in progress almost all day at the pest house.

The next night, Otis took his usual walk after the evening meal, and again he was impelled to cross the bridge. As he approached the south abutment, he was glad to see the barber's wife was there. They strolled far up the high road above the creek, where they could look down upon the works from a distance. Mary McKinnon, hatless and in a soft gray sweater, walked along, keeping perfect step and falling naturally into his stride. They climbed hills with no thought of fatigue, breathed deeply, and found it was not necessary to talk unless they felt like it.

Whenever she could, however, Mary McKinnon induced him to tell her about the dam. She had seen the camp grow, heard the blasts and the machines, watched the water gush from the tunnel outlet and the cableway buckets glide back and forth, but she was eager to understand it. Her husband had brought her all the gossip about his customers, but never a word about the job. It was only in passing through camp that they were uneasy. Neither would mention the fact, but they hoped they would not be seen and resented the necessity for concealment. They shook hands each night as she entered her shack. Once as they stood together by the bridge rail, Otis covered her hand with his



own and let it rest there. She moved a trifle nearer, and at first he felt childish and embarrassed, but he wanted to keep her there as long as he could. The night was clear, neither of them had the desire for sleep. When they heard footsteps upon the other end of the bridge, they stepped into the shadow of her cottage to let the workmen pass.

Feeling her hand beneath his palm and her supple shoulder against him, Otis wanted to put his arm around her waist and hesitantly did so. Quickly she turned toward him and stepped for a moment into his embrace and then they both saw the light in the pest house window far upstream, stiffened and let each other go.

"I wish I could," she said, earnestly.

There were tears in her eyes. She took his hand again.

"I know it's wrong to hold myself in so, but I can't help it."

That night Otis did not sleep, and in the morning he wrote Townsend that if the Philadelphia job was still open, he would take it in the early summer, as soon as the flood subsided.

Because the space in which men could work was limited, the crew was cut to four hundred and two of the empty bunkhouses were sold to a lumber dealer from Boise. Some of the remaining carpenters tore them down, the boards and two-by-fours

were stacked and hauled away. The river swirled angrily behind the cofferdam, but no one except Otis took the trouble to glance at it, since the concrete barrier stretched from north to south, thirty yards higher than the water could possibly rise. Still, Otis read the gauges and stood upon the timbers which the year before had trembled beneath his feet. The Austrians heard about a railroad job in Arizona and started out to find it, promising to let Jake Thompson know how long the job was good for. Townsend replied to Otis that the offer of the filter project still held good, so everything was taken from the shelves and the walls of the cottage, packed into trunks and shipped East. McGowan made a final round of the works with Otis and they said good-by. As the rig went around the bend beyond the gulch in which the graves had been dug, Otis turned back and tried to picture the structure as it would stand, complete, in another six months. And then he noticed his suit was spotted, and that it fitted him badly around the shoulders, and wondered how the doctor and Townsend contrived to keep their trousers pressed and to match their shirts and ties.

He did not feel the sadness he had expected. He was able to look at each landmark down the canyon without the pain he had thought would have been appropriate. A faint sense of defeat op-

pressed him, but that seemed at the moment the natural ending for things.

In the hot summer months, the dam reached its final height, its crest describing an elliptical arc from the spillway on the north hill across to the oval hill on the south which was faced with the ledge of granite and lava rock and through which the tunnel conducted the dwindling river. James McGowan was busier than ever, dismounting the heavy machinery, tearing down the bunkhouses, salvaging lumber which could be resold. All the men, except those who lived or were to live in the valley below, scattered to all points of the compass, singly and in groups, the more provident with a roll in their shirts, the majority with nothing at all.


In August, the surveying party marked with stakes a rectangle upon the oval hill, yards from the canyon, appearing as they worked alone in the huge and venerable arena as strange, almost, as when they had made their preliminary survey four years previously. A shaft was sunk and when it descended to within a few feet of the tunnel roof, in the section where the lava vein had dipped to play its small part in forming the archway, a final blast was made, the roof caved in, timber forms previously measured and constructed were lowered quickly into place and from above, concrete from the sole



remaining mixer was dumped into place, slowly blocking the stream.

At the tunnel inlet, just south of the cofferdam which was being ripped apart, the backwater stirred and ever so slowly the river widened, its waters crept up the steep banks and easy slopes behind the dam and the huge reservoir commenced to fill. In a week, the new lake had stolen eight miles up the canyon, in a month, twelve miles, spreading through small tributaries, swamping sage brush and syringas, submerging the scrubby trees. On horseback, from the hills on either side, James McGowan watched the results of his four years' work, amazed a bit, although he had realized that such a thing must happen in the end. The sun was reflected upon the long lake, as it was born. Trout leaped upon its surface, in grasshopper season, on a level two hundred feet higher than the river had flowed before.

Joselyn, much more occupied in getting the freighters loaded and the tons of materials and equipment hauled down the canyon to Boise than he was in keeping the time of the four dozen men still on the job, spent as much time as he could in watching the reservoir fill and roaming in the hidden corridors of the concrete structure which braced itself between the hills and turned the waters back. The crest was marked with simple copings




and a fifteen-foot roadway. The downstream face sloped gracefully downward, flaring at the toe, the upstream face was sheer, and marked at intervals by the oval openings through which the water in storage was to pour. Each evening, all the men except Joselyn ate together in the old mess tent which had been used for building the first long road. Joselyn took his meals with Edna, who lived in the shack she had formerly owned and which had been deserted by the electrician to whom she had sold it. They were waiting for her divorce to be granted in order to be married. The baby was well and strong and seldom out of his mother's sight if she could help it.

The timekeeper, after months of mild worry and bewilderment as to what he should do when the job was over, had had the inspiration one day to remain there. Some one would have to tend the gates, patrol the reservoir. He had grown fond of Edna, again, and she was used to him. Edna, who had been dreading leaving the canyon and entering the plains below, upon which life had always gone stormily for her, sang and played with John and mended Joselyn's clothes. They talked together, when they felt like it, and often remained silent all evening. As soon as the divorce and marriage papers were fixed up, they moved into the concrete apartment built into the dam at the south bank, where

the dials showed the temperatures and pressures throughout the structure, the levers controlled the movements of the gates, and the telephone provided direct communication with the valley below, where the water was to be used. The old prospector, whose old placer mine was now sixty feet under water and matted with rotting vegetation and sprouting marine plants, wandered up the spillway creek over the divide and got a job herding sheep.

On each slope, where the camp buildings had stood, drab rectangles upon the ground marked the places where the white men's bunkhouses had been, where the warehouse and the abandoned postoffice, the office and the hospital had focused their respective activities. The cindered flat where the blacksmith's shop, the mess house, the stable and the Bohunks' bunkhouses had been spread showed no marks at all. Joselyn's appointment as damkeeper came through from Washington, McGowan witnessed it, then started for Boise on foot. There was no further need for the stage, all the horses had been sold, and he did not wish to wait a half day for a rig to drive up from Boise. He walked steadily, his head bowed for a while, then he would scan the hill-tops, or test with his heavy boot a ledge which stuck up through the roadway. On the high bend where the road left the canyon, he looked out over the vast triangular valley, marked by tangents of the



distant river and by clumps of young trees where farmers had settled. Then he walked to the Barber-ton roadhouse, stopped for a glass of beer, and went on to Boise. He spent the evening in the lobby of Idanha hotel and when some one asked him where he was going, he said he believed he would go to Minneapolis. He had no reason for going there, except that in his contracting days he had done his banking in that city. Otis had asked him to come to the filter in Philadelphia, but he didn't like the East. Howard was in Chicago and he did not want to disturb him. So he took the No. 4 for Minneapolis at midnight, climbed into his berth and went to sleep.

The following spring, settlers in the valley below noticed that the river did not rise. Canals were being dug, laterals formed checkerboards through what had always been a desert. One day in late summer the telephone at the dam jingled and Joselyn got word to open the top set of gates. The reservoir was full, with all the melted accumulation of the winter snows on the Sawtooth watershed, and as he pulled the lever, the gates opened slowly, sending thunderous and crystalline waterfalls to the old river bottom, there to foam and dash down the canyon the slopes of which were parched by the annual drought. In the lower valley the river began to swell


unseasonably, and old timers stood upon the banks and scratched their heads.

There was nothing in the deserted canyon which suggested the need for hurry. Sparse grasses crept to the edge of the dam abutments, blotted out the rectangles which showed where buildings had stood. Hawks wheeled over the reservoir, and soon, in proper season, the migratory birds made it their habit to settle there.

In the chinks of the lava, the gophers sat on their hind legs, and Edna told the child stories about them until gradually he began to understand what she was saying and to reply. The hills to the south, so bare and so much alike, led to the badlands, the forest spread beyond the divide on the north and once in a couple of months, perhaps, the forester rode over to see Joselyn bringing venison slung across the back of his saddle. The graves in the gulch were cluttered with brush. The nights were filled with the mingled sounds of water creatures.

One afternoon, as Joselyn rode around the reservoir, he saw a peculiar bird which circled over the water. A sea gull had wandered over from the Great Salt Lake. A few others came from time to time but never stayed.

Blending slowly with the drab and ancient landscape the dam discharges its functions, like seasons, with the reservoir high in the spring and



drained in the fall. The slopes are dark at night and the grasses which have obscured all trace of men, machines and horses, sing in the wind and parch beneath the sun. And gradually the rattlesnakes have returned.













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